LOVE IN THE BIG CITY: INTIMACY, MARRIAGE, AND RISK IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY BERLIN

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the surprising push and pull between tradition and modernity that occurred when men and women living in Europe's fastest growing city fought off isolation and attempted to find love using self-consciously modern mindsets and technologies. Whether it was the decision to approach a stranger on the streetcar, go dancing with a co-worker, look for a mate in one of the city's many gay bars, post a newspaper personal ad, or eschew the institution of marriage altogether and opt for a free love union, Berliners of all stripes left the shores of tradition and ventured into the choppy waters of a more individualized kind of love. And while there was much to be gained (as they describe in diaries, short stories, penny novels, and lively newspaper debates), the decision to break with the way "grandfather took grandmother" was risky, not least because these maverick Berliners were testing the boundaries of both middle-class respectability and hegemonic masculinity and femininity. In exploring Berliners' narratives about their love lives, their metropolis, and their status as men and women, this dissertation argues that, even in a city whose most celebrated trait was its newness, traditional respectability proved remarkably robust. It reveals how Berlin – ostensibly Europe's most liberating city at the turn of the century – was not primarily a space of sexual anonymity and romantic freedom but rather the site of immense friction between modern individualism and traditional virtue. Dissecting the way Berliners found love in the big city thus demonstrates that both modern cities and *fin de siècle* gender and civic identities were rooted as much in a world that was quickly fading as they were in one that was rapidly cresting the horizon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have long looked forward to writing this section of my dissertation – so much so, in fact, that I started a list of people to thank long before I had even begun researching. Navigating the path that began with me starting college as a freshman and now sees me depositing my PhD dissertation took ten years, and though the title page of this work bears my name only, I have had a host of wise guides, experienced Sherpas, and friendly companions along the way. This section affords me the opportunity to thank them formally for their kindness over the years, and I am thrilled to have at long last reached the stage in this process where I can do so.

Of course, this metaphorical path began a good while before I ever started college, and I should like first of all to thank my parents, Dean and Cheryl Carrington, who not only raised me in the most exemplary and wonderful way, but also scrimped and saved such that they were able to pay my way through college. Beyond that, they encouraged me to read from an early age (I am thinking here of my mom taking me to the summer reading programs at the Iowa City Public Library and of my dad creating a "penny per page" reading incentive) and dedicated a huge amount of time and effort into helping me excel in school and become a well-rounded adult. Whether it was the personalized grade-school teacher gifts my mom sent with me at Christmas and the end of the year, the many miles she put on the family Mercury Villager driving me to music lessons, show choir practices, and school study sessions, or the endless hours my dad spent behind the video camera as he recorded my many performances and (fewer) award ceremonies, my parents somehow made education something so natural, so rewarding that I, all of these years later, have never wanted to stop learning and am only now closing the book on my days as a student.

I am also most grateful to my two siblings, Wes and Jacqui, who have always set the standard for academic excellence in our family. As my older brother, Wes served as my model and guide in school, and being able to follow his footsteps eliminated any uncertainty I may have had about the bewildering array of academic, extra-curricular, and life choices one encounters while growing up. I think I succeeded in school in no small part because I followed my brother's lead in most things, and even though I usually failed to match him step for step (after all, I was *not* invited to our elementary school's "extended learning program" for gifted students the way my brother had been, nor was I placed in the same extra-advanced math track as he was), his good name and rapport with teachers and coaches nevertheless made it easy for me to get off on the right foot. Indeed, I was always happy to walk into a classroom and hear the teacher say, "Are you Wes's brother?" This continued after high school, for I even followed my brother's footsteps in selecting a college and joined him at Wheaton College in the Chicago suburbs. The fact that Wes lived but one dorm room away from me during my freshman year gave me a giant boost in confidence and made the adjustment to college life significantly easier. I should also note that I never once felt pressured to measure up to him, and both he and my parents deserve a great deal of credit in this regard. Instead, it was our close friendship and shared childhood and adolescence that encouraged us both to thrive, and I suspect that my creativity and originality as a scholar has a lot to do with our constant and myriad efforts to come up with imaginative games (from epic G.I. Joe battles to intricate matchbox car / micro-machine universes), original challenges (from basement basketball shot circuits to two-man snow football tilts), zany songs and shows (from our patent-pending Hanes jingle to our "#50" Iowa Basketball radio show), and other miscellaneous diversions as a dynamic duo.

Our sister, Jacqui, usually played a vital role in these activities and challenges, and I am equally thankful to her for her unflagging enthusiasm for our ideas and willingness to play the role of what I now recognize as my first student. Family photographs show the two of us acting out one collaborative charade after the next, and I, as her older brother, was seemingly always directing the show and instructing her as I did so. From the many times she served as the secretary to a businessman who, despite his young age, looked legitimate thanks to his dad's old briefcase to the countless movie scenes we acted out line by line, Jacqui was the perfect younger sibling, laughing at my jokes, listening intently to my descriptions of the social dynamics of this or that Lego village, and doing her best to abide by the improvised and always-changing rules of whatever game we were playing. Even though I was scarcely aware of it at the time, I suspect that having Jacqui as my eager sidekick, pupil, and audience made me want to become a teacher before I ever started school. Of course, Jacqui did so well in school herself (she got better grades than my brother and I ever did) that I perhaps should have let her do the teaching and directing all of those years (indeed, she ultimately did become a star math teacher); but I am forever thankful to her for being my little sister and for helping me develop the self-confidence and love for instructing that are so important to me today.

Profound thanks are also due to my grandparents, Verne and Marlene Folkmann, who played no small role in making my education possible. On the most practical level, they provided both the roof that protected me from snow, rain, and cold as I wrote this dissertation and the car that helped me transport heavy loads of books to and from the library. For that matter, they also helped pay for my college tuition. Their most important contribution to this endeavor, however, has no doubt been their time. Football tailgates in Iowa City on fall Saturdays offered welcome diversions from the work of processing piles and piles of research materials, and I came up with

a number of key ideas and arguments for this dissertation during those 250-mile drives to and from Iowa City. My grandma's famous sandwiches, (gumbo) soups, cookies, and supply of Fresca also helped fuel (and quench) the entire process, as well. My grandparents have, in fact, provided this level of care and involvement throughout my entire life, and I have a hard time seeing how I would have reached this point without them.

It is also with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to thank my wife's family for their help in completing this project. My mother-in-law, Royann Mraz, financed, among other things, more than one repair to the Volkswagen she let us drive when we needed two cars, and she always sent us back to Urbana with a full compliment of goodies. Her visits, which generally involved a trip to Urbana's exquisite barbeque restaurant, Black Dog, always brightened our week, and we spent many a weekend relaxing at her home in Iowa City, where my brother-in-law, Eric Ammann, has always made me laugh. I'm grateful to my father-in-law, Bert Ammann, as well, not least because his efforts (in the middle of a German flight controllers' strike, no less) to come see me in Berlin made a big difference in helping me endure a research year away from family. That visit, which involved more spicy ethnic food than many would believe is possible, was the highlight of my time in Berlin. Bert also deserves all of the credit for introducing me to Döner kebab back in 2006, when, on yet another visit to see me in Germany (this time in Mainz, where I was completing my MA), he rather impulsively purchased two Döner from a vendor outside of the *Real Markt* grocery store and convinced me that they are a true delicacy worth enjoying by the twos and threes (as I did so often in Berlin). I can no longer count the number of frequent flier points Bert used to fly me (and my wife) back and forth to Germany for research and enjoyment, and his many Euro-donations helped me live comfortably and happily in a foreign country. Nearly all of my fondest memories from Germany involve time spent with Bert

and my wife in one German locale or another, and I am extremely thankful to him for his time and support throughout my many years of graduate school. Bert's mother, Marile, and late father, Eric, also deserve a hearty thank-you for their love over the years. Marile, who left Germany after the war, has more than once offered to read through source material I might not have time to get to, and I have treasured her German delicacies, letters of encouragement, and generous gifts throughout the last decade.

I would like to thank Marile's sister, Dorothee Bäseler, separately, as it is difficult to overstate her contributions to this dissertation. Dorothee, who lives in Munich and has just turned 93, once remarked, "I'm old, you're young, but we understand one another." How right she was – we have become fast friends over the decade I have known her, and while Munich's archives played but a small role in my research for this dissertation, having a family member in Germany – someone I could visit by hopping on a train or a 50-minute flight – was a tremendously important part of my time there. Each year, Dorothee and I watched as family members boarded flights back to the United States after visits and short trips. I usually had a stay of some length ahead of me, and though the commuter rail ride we shared back into Munich was less joyful now that our family had departed, having Dorothee in the seat next to me made everything more bearable. Whether it was a walk around Lake Tegernsee, an afternoon on her balcony spent practicing the old German script by composing a letter together to Marile, or watching the news, as we did every evening, my time with Dorothee was not merely a distraction from the fact that I was apart from my wife and family; it was itself special and meaningful, and I will always cherish the memories of our time together. I should also note that this dissertation is better because of my many, many conversations with Dorothee over the years. Though she is neither a historian – she is, in fact, a brilliant medical doctor and psychologist – nor old enough (born in

1920) to speak directly to the atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Germany, Dorothee always offered useful questions and feedback as I described the various stages of my project and research. For that matter, our interactions have substantially enriched my understanding of twentieth-century Germany, and I cannot count the number of times I have referred to a conversation with Dorothee in lectures or discussions with students about German history. Dorothee has been extremely generous to me over the years, and I seemed always to leave Munich with many more Euros in my pocket than when I arrived (indeed, she insisted that I have no expenses while visiting); but, as helpful as that support was, I am most grateful to Dorothee for her friendship over the past decade. She played an integral role in making this dissertation possible.

Apart from my family, I have relied on the knowledge and expertise of academic mentors, fellow scholars, and archivists in conceiving of and completing this project. Thanks first of all to my dissertation advisor, Peter Fritzsche, who has provided the perfect balance of guidance and independence from day one of my time at Illinois. Peter helped steer me through the maze of course requirements, comprehensive exams, and grant proposals, and his skills as a writer and a historical thinker will forever serve as a model of excellence (even if I can never even dream of matching it). It was Peter who actually proposed the specific focus on love for my dissertation, and I am sure that a good many lines of this work would be more breathtakingly elegant if I had only had a tape recorder running during our meetings over the years. Indeed, the brilliance and polish of what Peter says purely off the cuff exceeds what most people could ever hope to produce in writing after many, many drafts and edits, and I have simply tried to absorb as much of it as possible. It has been a true pleasure having Peter as my advisor these six years, and being able to spend time with his family – both in Urbana and in Berlin – has been a treat.

The history department at Illinois is blessed to have such a bevy of talented scholars, and I have certainly benefitted from working with a number of them. Mark Micale took me out for a coffee just a few weeks after I arrived in Urbana, and he has been a wonderfully kind and extremely helpful mentor ever since. I suspect that every PhD student would be happier and more productive if he had a Mark Micale in his life. Similarly, I met Harry Liebersohn on my initial visit to Illinois in the fall of 2007, and he, too, has been an invaluable resource from the beginning. Mark Steinberg, Craig Koslofsky, and Clare Crowston have all assisted at various points of my career, as well, and I am grateful to them for their wisdom and friendliness. I cannot fail to mention the venerable German Colloquium at Illinois, whose members have read more than one proposal or draft of mine and provided helpful feedback. I would also like to thank Tony Pollock, whose seminar on masculinity in the English department was perhaps the most enjoyable classroom experience I have ever had. Tony would be a part of any and every dream department I would ever construct, not least because he is the funniest scholar I have ever met.

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archival seminar in 2010 and offered not only first-rate historical insight but also many laughs as we moved from Speyer to Cologne to Weimar.

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I would also like to thank my very first German teachers, Margy Winkler and Heidi Galer, as well as Clint Shaffer, who, as my undergraduate advisor, offered valuable advice about pursuing a career in academia and also introduced me to the humor of Loriot. Thanks also to Rainer Nicolaysen, Suzanne Kaufman, David Dennis, and Timothy Gilfoyle, all of whom served as mentors throughout my two MA degrees at Middlebury College and Loyola University Chicago. Eberhard and Sonja Hofmann deserve special thanks, as well, for hosting me at their home in Bad Godesberg, Germany at various points throughout my undergraduate and graduate career. I spent Christmas with them in 2006 and even chopped down my first real Christmas tree with Eberhard.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the financial support of a number of organizations. The Department of History at Illinois awarded me with ample fellowships, teaching assistantships, and research grants, and I am thankful to then-Director of Graduate Studies, Diane Koenker, as well as the staff in the department office for their many hours of assistance over the years. The German Historical Institute provided an invaluable summer seminar on reading the old German script, without which I might well have sat dumbfounded in

front of the piles upon piles of handwritten archival material I later encountered. The Fulbright Commission provided a very generous grant to support my year of dissertation research in Berlin, and I am especially thankful to the Fulbright advisors at the University of Illinois – including Laura Hastings, David Shug, and, as my language certifier, Andrea Golato – for their help with the application process. Thanks also to the Iowa City Noon Rotary Club, whose grant allowed me to travel to archives around Germany and complete important parts of my research. The Doris G. Quinn Foundation also awarded me a dissertation completion fellowship that allowed me to put the finishing touches on my dissertation unencumbered by the responsibilities of teaching.

Finally, I am thrilled to be able to thank my wife, Melissa, whose importance to this entire project cannot be overstated. Not a few of the good ideas in this dissertation are hers, and many more were born out of our conversations along the way. I have the great fortune of being married to an excellent writer and master of grammar, and the following, to put it bluntly, reads a lot better because of what I have learned from her over the years (dating back to my first "peer-reviewed" paper – an essay on John Steinbeck's "The Harness" for my eleventh-grade American Literature class – which she reviewed and helped improve). Melissa is also an avid reader, and her enthusiasm for this story – and practice of picking out her favorite passages and reading them aloud – has made all of the hard work worth it. Melissa has stood by my side throughout these extra years of my education, never once suggesting that I should perhaps think about hurrying up or choosing a more profitable venture, and I am forever grateful to her for coming with me to Champaign-Urbana to pursue her law degree at Illinois, where I had been admitted as a PhD student. She also endured a year alone while I was in Berlin doing the research for this dissertation, and her love sustained me during the long months of solitary work in the archives

and at my perch in front of emotionless microfilm readers. That year, strangely enough, was our own story of "love in the big city" – letters, emails, and transatlantic video chats, as well as the occasional trip home – but we made the best of it, and this, the final product, is dedicated to her.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

On June 17, 1914, a 39-year-old, single seamstress named Frieda Kliem left Berlin on a suburban commuter train to meet the man she had fallen in love with through a newspaper personal ad. What she found when she got there was not the wedding proposal she had hoped for or even the man she thought she knew. The man she met murdered her, stole her keys, and made off with the few valuables she had in her tiny apartment in the heart of Berlin. When a forester found her body over a week later, the police launched an investigation into her upbringing, adult years, and love life that later made up the core of a highly-publicized murder trial during World War I, one that pitted the full legal resources of the state against Berlin's most famous defense attorney, featured delays, false starts, and lengthy recesses, and produced more than one shocking twist. After the jury's verdict rang out in 1916, the case documents were placed back in their file folders, the evidence was sealed in green police envelopes, and the entire stack was filed away in the police archives, where it sat unused and unopened for the rest of the twentieth century.

On August 22, 2011, while searching through Berlin's state archive for material related to love at the turn of the century, I came across these files, the first of which launched right into the police's frantic search for Frieda Kliem's murderer. As I worked my way through the file, opening those green police envelopes of sealed evidence and hoping the archivists would not mind that I was (carefully) ripping into previously-unopened, century-old items, I began to piece together the fascinating story of a poor, single Berlin seamstress who spent her life searching for love in a modern metropolis that seemed to thwart her every effort to make connections and find intimacy. Here was a woman who, like hundreds of thousands of others, had arrived in Berlin at the moment of its metamorphosis into the most dynamic city in the world and then struggled to

make her way without much in terms of family connections, employment prospects, or, crucially, money. In fact, as she passed through her twenties and most of her thirties, she interacted with nearly every aspect of turn-of-the-century, big city love that all of my other sources evinced collectively, whether it was urban loneliness and a focus on practicality; modern approaches to love such as bicycling, work, and fortuitous encounters; casual dating, eternal bachelorhood, and free love relationships; or, of course, personal ads. It soon became clear that while Frieda Kliem was (somewhat paradoxically) at once totally unknown and, for a few weeks during the years 1914 to 1916, a sensation about whom every Berliner was talking, she was also the consummate turn-of-the-century Berliner, the everywoman. Her concerns, her joys, the very details of her 39-year existence – these were, as much as she surely felt she carried them alone, shared by thousands upon thousands of other similarly ordinary Berliners whose lives were unremarkable enough that, frankly, few actually did remark on them.[1]

This dissertation is about Frieda Kliem's world. It is about the turn-of-the century city – what it was like to live and work there; to fall in love there; to be lonely, to fail there; to be modern or traditional there; to be an individual, a man or a woman, masculine or feminine there; to be gay or straight there; to be a sensation there; to be respectable, honorable, or reliable there; and to be – or *want* to be – middle-class there. At the most basic level, this study began with a deceptively simple question: how did Berliners find love in the big city? Finding no direct answer to my question in the massive body of literature on *fin de siècle* cities, I set out to answer

[1] Indeed, locating source material about "normal," everyday Berliners is itself *remarkably* difficult. Politicians, writers, scientists, and religious figures are, for the most part, fairly easy to track down, mostly because parliamentary protocols, cultural journals, scientific registers, and church records had a reason to make note of what they did, said, and thought. Diaries and memoirs naturally make for fantastic historical tools, but, here too, we face the problem of obscurity, of preservation, of access. After all, few "normal" people think anyone will be interested in their diaries and memoirs and thus simply discard them. Specialty archives like the German Diary Archive (*Deutsches Tagebucharchiv*), which collects any and every diary people are willing to send its way, offer an excellent starting point, but their holdings are also limited.

it myself. Doing so required, on the one hand, unearthing an enormous amount of buried, forgotten, and disparate sources and culling them for information related to love. But to ask about love is also to investigate much larger themes of turn-of-the-century life, namely modernity and modernization, class, gender, sexuality, emotions, and urbanization. Moreover, because we cannot teleport back to the Berlin of over one hundred years ago and have to rely instead on the texts, images, and structures people like Frieda Kliem left behind, we must also interrogate the equally massive problems of narrative and discourse.

These are broad themes, to be sure, and while no single volume has yet tackled all of these questions at once, historians, sociologists, literary scholars, and cultural thinkers have provided a reliable path for deeper inquiry. Most basically, our focus here is on the contours of urban, middle-class identity in the modern world. "Modern" or "modernity," as these terms apply to this study, are simply convenient shorthand for what Anthony Giddens has described as "the modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence."[2] Of course, the entire constellation of implications, dynamics, and meanings of the modern world can hardly be dealt with by any single scholar (much less a single sentence), and turn-of-the-century observers like Simmel, Durkheim, Tönnies, and Weber, critical theorists of the 1930s and 1940s like Kracauer and Benjamin, and contemporary scholars from Habermas to Giddens have wasted no ink dissecting and theorizing the nature of modern(ized) life. And while it may be difficult to find consensus, most notions of modernity and modernization can be broken down into waves of commonality. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century observers for the most part tended to understand modernity as the product of a process of modernization that fundamentally and

[2] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1990), 1.

irrevocably changed the world (and, more importantly, its inhabitants) as they knew it. Ferdinand Tönnies, for example, asserted early on that modern, urban life dissolved communal (*gemeinschaftliche*) bonds based on tradition and shared beliefs and erected in their place societal or corporative (*gesellschaftliche*) associations that were colored more by the (often) cold realities of business, reason, and self-interest.[3] Tönnies's French colleague, Émile Durkheim, put it similarly when he suggested that modernization had replaced "organic" solidarities with "mechanical" ones that were so much weaker that modern men and women suffered from hyper-individualization and *anomie*, his famous term for the utter isolation of the modern individual.[4] Georg Simmel, who was perhaps primarily interested in urbanization (as we will discuss at greater length in Chapter One), nevertheless pointed to the individualizing effects of the modern world and argued, much like Tönnies, that the modern metropolis severed the interpersonal bonds that had, in villages and country towns, connected people and given their lives a solid foundation.[5] And Max Weber, who, with his enthusiasm for dueling, seemed perhaps to cling to certain un-modern rituals, nevertheless coined a phrase that speaks to the irreversible rationalization of the modern world by modernization: the demystification of the world ("*die Entzauberung der Welt*," often translated as "the disenchantment of the world").[6]

In each case, as later critics of these early works of modernization theory pointed out, modernization is seen here as a teleological, irresistible, and more or less one-way process of

[3] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1887).

[4] Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social: Étude sur l'organisation des sociétés supérieures* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1893).

[5] Georg Simmel, *Über soziale Differenzierung* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890).

[6] Max Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf," in *Geistige Arbeit als Beruf. Vier Vorträge vor dem Freistudentischen Bund* (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1919), 16.

rationalization that rested on a sharp dichotomy of old/new or traditional/modern and, in any case, sought to generalize "modernization" in terms of a European or Euro-centric example.[7] The sociologist Ulrich Beck, for example, saw in modernization not simply a single process of transition from traditional to modern but rather a sort of perpetual unsettling of "tradition" through what he termed "reflexive modernity."[8] Marshall Berman, too, highlighted the paradoxes of the modern world by asserting that modernity itself is not the result or, better, the destination of modernization but rather "a state of perpetual becoming."[9] Here, of course, Berman draws heavily on Marx, who, as one of the first theorists of modernity, argued that modern life, organized as it was around the ethos of capitalism, was characterized by uncertainty and fleetingness. Baudelaire, too, described modern life as "contingent" and "transitory" (as we will see in Chapter One).[10]

Indeed, as much as this is a story about old and new, traditional and modern, what interests us more than anything else is the tension between them, the clash between old and new, traditional and modern, and the pull of each on turn-of-the-century German society. One of my central arguments, in fact, is that what characterized this period more than anything were these tensions and back-and-forths that are at once so typical of the post-modernization critiques mentioned above and profoundly interesting from a historical point of view. Berman writes that "[t]o be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy,

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[7] See, among many other critiques of the modernity paradigm, Rebecca L. Spang, "Paradigms and Paranoia: How Modern Is the French Revolution?" *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 1 (February 2003): 119-147.

[8] Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage, 1992).

[9] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 16.

[10] David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 21, 2.

growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are," and he likens this experience to that of living in a state of "paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity."[11] Berman goes on to periodize "the experience of modernity," as his famous book is titled, into three sections (the origins of modernity, the straddling of old and new, and the crisis of what one might call complete modernity), the second of which (the nineteenth and early twentieth century) was plagued, he argues, by the memory of "what it is like to live, materially and spiritually, in worlds that are not modern at all."[12] The resulting "inner dichotomy" – and, more importantly, the cultural expression thereof – is profoundly interesting from a historical perspective, and nineteenth-century Europeans' efforts to work through the tensions and nostalgia of the modern age has left behind a rich and varied array of sources for scholars to mine.[13]

In this dissertation, our focus is on the way this nostalgia – these dichotomies, as it were – manifested itself in matters of love, intimacy, and marriage. Instead of asking how one's political engagement, self-reflection, or artistic penchants reflected what Berman has called the "maelstrom of modern life," I ask how the experience of modernity meshed and clashed with the way Berliners navigated and narrated love;[14] how, in other words, matters of love, intimacy, and marriage register the tenuous back and forth between the modern world and the tug of those memories of an earlier, fading, or already lost world.

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[11] Berman, 15.

[12] Ibid., 17.

[13] Ibid.; Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press); Mark D. Steinberg, "Melancholy and Modernity: Emotions and Social Life in Russia Between the Revolutions," *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 4 (2008): 813-841.

[14] Berman, 16. For a more general exploration of the ways in which these tensions of the modern world manifested themselves in the changing nature of love, specifically, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

Of course, approaches to and normativities regarding love are heavily influenced by the strictures and mentalities of one's class, and, in the case of turn-of-the-century Berlin, it was the notion of middle-class*ness*, or *Bürgerlichkeit*, that was so central to the way Berliners ordered their lives. Historians of modern Germany have long argued that Berman's "maelstroms of modern life," or the tensions between the memory of tradition and the modern reality, are most easily visible in the *Bürgertum*, or the German middle class, specifically inasmuch as it underwent – according to the famous *Sonderweg* argument – a delayed and stunted process of modernization relative to its European neighbors.[15] I have no interest in re-opening the *Sonderweg* debate in this dissertation, not least because I agree with *Sonderweg* critics who suggest that the argument has run its course and that it is more productive to move on to other questions.[16] For that matter, my argument about love is thoroughly apolitical, and I make no claims about the extent to which Berliners' beliefs about intimacy and marriage might have predisposed them to prefer this or that political movement.[17] Indeed, for our purposes, we might adjust the phrasing of the *Sonderweg* thesis and consider the extent to which the German middle class clung especially tightly to "tradition" vis-à-vis love and intimacy; the extent, put differently, to which the *Bürgertum*'s unique – and, among other things, relatively delayed –

[15] Hans-Ulrich Wehler no doubt counts as the most notable proponent of the *Sonderweg* thesis, though he was by no means the first, as Jürgen Kocka points out in his 1988 article, "German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (Jan., 1988): 3-16. For Wehler's argument, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, 5 vols. (Munich, C. H. Beck, 1987-2008).

[16] For example, Lynn Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire: 1871-1918* (New York: Routledge, 1996); "Forum: Interview with David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley," *German History* 22, no. 2 (May 2004): 229-245.

[17] On this point, I should note that my periodization for this dissertation – denoted in the title simply as "turn-of-the-century Berlin" – is a specific gesture to this apolitical focus. I might well have included the dates "1871-1918" in the title, as these markers of Germany's Wilhelmine Era (or so-called Second Empire) are the most commonly used parameters for studies of turn-of the-century Germany. But because my argument has very little to do with prevailing political mindsets or Germany's form of constitutional monarchy, I have very intentionally chosen to avoid any sort of politically-oriented periodization. The vast majority of my sources come from the years 1898-1914, but a number of books, periodicals, and government records are from the 1880s and early 1890s, as well.

modernization is perhaps evident in the ways Berliners struggled to reconcile modern love with their nostalgia for a love that was seemingly becoming extinct.

My study is certainly not the first to consider the nature of the German middle class during this period of transition or the extent to which nineteenth-century normativities lingered on into the twentieth century, even if a great many classic studies of the *Bürgertum* more or less limit their focus to the political dimensions of the middle class or attempt to read political events through a variety of social and cultural mentalities.[18] Indeed, as David Blackbourn laments, "[i]t is the failures and sins of omission of the bourgeoisie that have so often attracted attention."[19] For the most part, it has been historians of gender who have seen fit to trace middle-class normativities in Germany from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries on their own terms.[20] Ute Frevert's study of dueling, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel*, is perhaps the most outstanding example, for she succeeds in establishing a picture of the *Bürgertum*'s sensibilities, aspirations, and insecurities through the lens of the elaborate and complicated system of honor and dueling that, in many ways, bridged a gap between what was perceived as a lost, Teutonic past and an industrialized, modernized present. Crucially, dueling revolved around the idea of one's eligibility for a duel, and Frevert demonstrates quite masterfully the ways in which the notion of being middle class – or middle-class*ness*, as I refer

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[18] For example, Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968); David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Richard Evans, *Rethinking German History* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987).

[19] David Blackbourn, "The German bourgeoisie: an introduction," in David Blackbourn and Richard Evans (eds.), *The German Bourgeoisie* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 1.

[20] One of the most masterful such works is no doubt Peter Gay's set of volumes about *The Bourgeois Experience*, which rank as quintessential works of cultural history. This dissertation, while also a work of cultural history, aims at establishing a more quotidian, *alltagsgeschichtliche* portrait of middle-class life. Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience. Victoria to Freud. Volume II: The Tender Passion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

to it throughout this dissertation – was at once extremely compelling and fiercely defended.[21] Middle-class*ness*, as both Frevert, in *Men of Honour*, and a variety of other scholars have long suggested, faced the social and cultural aspirations of a rising working class – one that might have rendered null any authority (social, cultural, economic, moral, or otherwise) the middle class held over it.[22] So it was, as Hansjoachim Henning argued in 1973, that children of middle-class parents nearly always married other middle-class men and women.[23] So, too, did the middle class mostly display a contentedness at being middle class such that they were not terribly interested in aping the styles of the upper class and instead, as a number of historians have demonstrated, embraced and developed middle-class*ness* as such.[24] After all, "[*Ich*] *wünschte ein Bürger zu sein*" ("If only I were middle class") is how the famous line from Theodor Mommsen's diary entry from 1899 reads; and though Lothar Gall may be correct in pointing out the pessimism in Mommsen's sentiment, the legitimacy and desirability of *Bürgerlichkeit* at the turn of the century is nevertheless unmistakable.[25] Indeed, as Manfred Hettling and Stefan

[21] Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[22] Frevert, *Men of Honour*; Hansjoachim Henning, "Soziale Verflechtungen der Unternehmer in Westfalen, 1860-1914," *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* 23 (1978): 1-30.

[23] Hansjoachim Henning, *Das westdeutsche Bürgertum in der Epoche der Hochindustrialisierung, 1860-1914* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1973).

[24] For example, Dolores L. Augustine, "Arriving in the upper class: the wealthy business elite of Wilhelmine Germany," in Blackbourn and Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie*, 46-86; Karin Kaudelka-Hanisch, "The titled businessman: Prussian Commercial Councillors in the Rhineland and Westphalia during the nineteenth century," in Blackbourn and Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie*, 87-114; Dick Geary, "The industrial bourgeoisie and labour relations in Germany, 1871-1933," in Blackbourn and Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie*, 140-161; Frevert, *Men of Honour*; Hartmut Kaelble, "Wie feudal waren die deutschen Unternehmer im Kaiserreich?" in Richard Tilly (ed.), *Beiträge zur quantitativen vergleichenden Unternehmensgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985).

[25] *Die Wandlung* 3 (1948): 69-70; Lothar Gall, "'...Ich wünsche ein Bürger zu sein.' Zum Selbstverständnis des deutschen Bürgertums im 19. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 245, no. 3 (December 1987): 601-623.

Ludwig Hoffmann note, middle-class*ness* became a sort of "religious mood" with its own sacralized tenets and values.[26]

Scholars have covered a great deal of ground in outlining the contours of *Bürgerlichkeit*, or middle-class*ness*, over the last few decades, and Sylvia Schraut's new biography of the middle-class lifestyle is praiseworthy as a novel effort at conceiving of middle-class*ness* as a rich and complex life of its own – a "biography" of which might capture the totality of the middle-class experience as never before.[27] As innovative as Schraut's concept is, however, it ultimately prevents her from moving beyond a rather straightforward cataloguing of the traits that were considered essential to middle-class life. Indeed, Schraut fails to access the margins of middle-class respectability (where one strove to gain it, struggled to maintain it, and risked losing it) in the mundane, private, and intimate aspects of men and (in her case) women's lives at the turn of the century. This is problematic, for the strain between opportunity and risks in modern class society surrounded Berliners' lives at the turn of the century, and it is central to our argument here. Ulrich Beck has referred to this tension as the effect of "individualization" in the modernized world, a "categorical shift in the relation between the individual and society" that manifested itself in the "removal from historically prescribed social forms and commitments" and the "loss of traditional security with respect to practical knowledge, faith and guiding

[26] Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "Zur Historisierung bürgerliche Werte," in Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (eds.), *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel: Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 9.

[27] Sylvia Schraut, *Bürgerinnen im Kaiserreich: Biografie eines Lebensstils* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2013); see also Ute Frevert (ed.), *Bürgerinnen und Bürger: Geschlechterverhältnisse im 19. Jahrhundert. Zwölf Beiträge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988); Ute Frevert, "Bürgerliche Familie und Geschlechterrollen: Modell und Wirklichkeit," in Lutz Niethammer et al (eds.), *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland: Historische Einblicke, Fragen, Perspektiven* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1990): 90-98; Hettling and Hoffmann, *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel*.

norms."[28] Individualization is not simply individualism, which we generally associate with a sort of self-reliance and independent ethos (or, as Beck puts it, the liberation of consciousness and identity).[29] Individualization, by contrast, refers to the tenuous position of the individual in a social structure that is marked not by community and tradition but by dependency on the labor market that extends "into every corner of (earning a) living."[30] Beck describes these dependencies thusly:

> In advanced modernity, individualization takes place under the general conditions of a societalizing process that makes individual autonomizations increasingly impossible. The individual is indeed removed from traditional commitments and support relationships but exchanges them for the constraints of existence in the labor market, and, as a consumer, with the standardizations and controls they contain. The place of traditional ties and social forms (social class, nuclear family) is taken by secondary agencies and institutions, which stamp the biography of the individual and make that person dependent upon fashions, social policy, economic cycles and markets, contrary to the image of individual control which establishes itself in consciousness. [...] Individualization thus takes effect precisely under general social conditions which allow an individual autonomous private existence even less than before.[31]

If we apply Beck directly to our topic here, we might rephrase his explanation and note simply that while the melting away of some aspects of a more traditional, communal society perhaps freed the individual to make his own way in the city, it also meant that he *had* to do so alone, especially in the middle class, which, outside of the associations, or *Vereine*, that were an essential part of stable, middle-class identity, lacked the solidarity of the working class or the manifold securities of the upper class. There was thus a certain compulsion to modern middle-class*ness* – a compulsion to maintain it in all areas of one's life: in business, in culture, in

[28] Beck, *Risk Society*, 127-128.

[29] Ibid., 128.

[30] Ibid., 130.

[31] Ibid., 131.

consumption, to be sure, but also in one's intimate, family life.[32] Indeed, as Beck writes, "the private sphere" is not immune from these dependencies or risks but rather simply "the outside turned inside and made private."[33] In fact, here, in matters of love and intimacy, the stakes for making one's own way were even higher, for, as we will see, there was no *Verein* for love (though many certainly wanted one). As such, we see here the striving for middle-class*ness* play out in particularly interesting ways, and this is precisely where scholars have, with a few exceptions, not yet ventured.[34]

This is our task in this dissertation – to explore the intimate dynamics of middle-class*ness*, and while Frieda Kliem was hardly a typical middle-class woman (indeed, for most of her life, her income and employment placed her firmly among the ranks of the working class), her considerable efforts at remaining middle-class, as well as the fragments of middle-class*ness* that she took with her from her childhood and somewhat enduring family connections over the years, make her such an interesting case study for the dimensions of petit bourgeois life. Frieda Kliem's story naturally cannot speak for all Berlin women at the turn of the century, and the lives and characters that fill out this dissertation range from those who lived quite comfortable and affluent middle-class lives (women, for example, who played tennis and took regular vacations) to those even worse off than Frieda. But fixing our gaze on the boundaries of *Bürgerlichkeit* – and on the lower boundary of the middle class, in particular – opens a window onto that

[32] See, especially, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *The Normal Chaos of Love*, trans. Mark Ritter and Jane Wiebel (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 3-8.

[33] Ibid., 133.

[34] To be sure, social historians have, indeed, examined the selection of spouses in imperial Germany; but the talk here is mostly about the rise or fall of the love marriage, the role of parents in choosing spouses, and the importance of money and dowries. See, for example, Andreas Gestrich, *Geschichte der Familie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999); Marion Kaplan, "For Love or Money: The Marriage Strategies of Jews in Imperial Germany," *Women & History* 10 (1985): 121-164; Catherine Dollard, *The Surplus Woman: Unmarried in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

important and often buried aspect of class: striving. Working-class Berliners were absolutely aware of their city's moral and cultural norms (which were set by the middle class), and all but the most destitute men and women harbored not only the desire to achieve and adopt middle-class*ness* for their own lives, but also the sense that it was possible and achievable, whether through hard work, craftiness, or sheer luck. *Bürgerlichkeit* thus in many ways extended beyond the very boundaries it defined and defended, and our focus on the idea of being middle class allows us to draw conclusions about Berlin as a whole and not just middle-class Berlin, strictly defined.

This, of course, is the great advantage of gender history, more generally, for we see in the articulation of gender normativities and the navigation of private, intimate matters the most basic, foundational values of a society, class, or group.[35] Contemporary observers noticed that this was especially true in the case of love: Simmel, for his part, considered love "one of the great formative categories of existence," while Marianne Weber recognized that love was so powerful that it potentially stood in the way of women who wanted to "mature to human wholeness."[36] And while not everyone could speak with the eloquence of a Simmel or a Weber, the changing dynamics of love and intimacy at the turn of the century nevertheless had people

[35] Karin Hausen's recent volume of essays is an excellent example of this point. Karin Hausen, *Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012). More basically, one might refer to Joan Scott's now practically immortal essay, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075.

[36] Georg Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality, and Love*, trans. and introduced by Guy Oakes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 159; Marianne Weber, *Die Frauen und die Liebe* (Königstein im Taunus: Karl Robert Langewiesche Verlag, 1935), 10. On the rather interesting theoretical sparring between Simmel and Weber on evolving gender norms in the modern age, see Theresa Wobbe, "Elective affinities: Georg Simmel and Marianne Weber on gender and modernity," Barbara L. Marshall and Anne Witz (eds.), *Engendering the Social: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004): 54-68.

talking as never before.[37] It was not simply that the approaches to intimacy and marriage that were emerging at the turn of the century were *new*, however;[38] nor, as much as I agree with Edward Ross Dickinson about the inherent tensions in the bourgeois domestic ideal once fully realized at the end of the nineteenth century, does it seem sufficient to trace all of the gender discord at the turn of the century back to incongruous and frustrated marital dynamics.[39] The debate was so fierce, rather, because love (and gender and sexuality, more generally) at the turn of the century was the site of the painful playing out of tensions between a rather conservative middle-class*ness* and the bewildering explosion of new possibilities in the modern metropolis; it was women proposing to men, men preferring bachelorhood to marriage, and men and women meeting on the streetcar or through the newspapers. Elaine Showalter put it nicely when she wrote, with regard to a crisis of sexuality at the *fin de siècle*, that these were the social changes and concerns least likely to be ignored;[40] we might augment this and suggest that the explosion of new approaches to love at the *fin de siècle* highlighted a weakness in the very foundation of *Bürgerlichkeit* that one could neither afford to ignore (for he might lose out on love and intimacy altogether) nor risk correcting.

This was nowhere so true as in the city, which, as the "place of the enlarged horizon of opportunities"[41] (to borrow from Gottfried Korff), supercharged battles for gender hegemony by

[37] Edward Ross Dickinson, "'A Dark, Impenetrable Wall of Complete Incomprehension': The Impossibility of Heterosexual Love in Imperial Germany," *Central European History* 40 (2007): 488-489.

[38] After all, this is a relatively established point by now. See, among others, Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990).

[39] Dickinson, "'A Dark, Impenetrable Wall of Complete Incomprehension.'"

[40] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*.

[41] Gottfried Korff, "Mentalität und Kommunikation in der Großstadt. Berliner Notizen zur 'inneren' Urbanisierung," in Theodor Kohlmann and Hermann Bausinger (eds.), *Großstadt. Aspekte empirischer Kulturforschung* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1985): 343-361.

making subversive gender identities and non-hegemonic approaches to intimacy all the more visible.[42] But while the anonymity of city life offered a freedom to practice alternative gender identities, the resulting diversity became, at the same time, the object of no small amount of public criticism.[43] Of course, as Mark Steinberg points out in his study of *fin de siècle* St. Petersburg, it was more the urban press – most notably newspapers – and a growing body of sexual scientific literature than the city itself that made alternative masculinities and femininities so visible and ripe for public comment (and prostitution, of all of the seemingly bourgeoning examples of "decadence" and a quickly fading sense of urban propriety, was without a doubt the favorite of city newspapers and feuilletonists, just as it was the most concerning to city magistrates, police commissioners, and pastors).[44] But battles for gender hegemony in any case played out most fiercely in the city, and debates about the boundaries of love, sex, and intimacy were, not surprisingly, highly charged.

Of course, there was hardly consensus about what sex – commercial or connubial – was or what it should be, not to mention what sex had to do with love, whether sex was the same thing as intimacy, and how all three terms related to one another.[45] Love may, in fact, have been the slipperiest term of all. For some, as Edward Ross Dickinson writes, love "was really just the need for a highly desirable item of consumption – sex." For others, it was "the will of the 'race'

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[42] Klaus Tenfelde, "Urbanization and the Spread of Urban Culture," in Friedrich Lenger (ed.), *Towards an Urban Nation: Germany since 1780* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 30-31; Margot Finn, "Sex and the City: Metropolitan Modernities in English History," *Victorian Studies* 44 (2001): 25-32; Sherwin Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immortality in Berlin, 1913-1916," *The Art Bulletin* 82 (2000): 117-148.

[43] Mark Steinberg, *Petersburg fin de siècle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 185-186; Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1939* (New York: Algora, 2006); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

[44] Steinberg, *Petersburg fin de siècle*, 188-189.

[45] Dickinson, "'A Dark, Impenetrable Wall of Complete Incomprehension.'"

for procreation and evolutionary betterment" and decidedly "not a feeling."[46] There were no doubt other takes on love vis-à-vis sex and intimacy, too (one thinks, for example, of Marx's famous proclamation that bourgeois marriage is nothing more than a form of prostitution);[47] but lest we fall into a trap of conflating love and sex or of simply assuming they were worlds apart, we must state clearly how we will use these terms in the present study – which is very intentionally titled "*love* in the big city" and not (as many Google search hits as it might have gained this dissertation) "*sex* in the [big] city." Love, sex, and intimacy naturally are and were quite different animals, though they without a doubt share a great deal of commonality. I am hesitant to try to define love here, and it is, in a way, comforting that even the all-knowing *Meyers grosses Konversations-Lexikon* of 1905 recognized the fact that defining love was a dangerous game. "The term [love] contains so many diverse impulses," it explained somewhat confusingly and guardedly, "that one must necessarily recognize differences and draw certain boundaries so as not to mix up entirely different terms." In the most basic sense, however, it defined love as "the irresistible impulse for union" with someone (or something), though it admitted that "sexual love," as a physical union or satisfaction, was entirely separate and often incompatible with emotional unity ("for example, as with two fiery and inflexible individuals who could otherwise never live happily together").[48] In this dissertation, my interest in love as a category of analysis extends beyond sex; indeed, I use the term love to refer to the totality or interwoven sum of affections, connections, desires, and tendernesses that were so magnetic and deeply meaningful for the men and women whose lives fill these pages. At the same time,

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[46] Ibid., 481.

[47] Quoted in Mark Poster, *Critical Theory of the Family* (New York: Continuum, 1988), 42-43.

[48] "Liebe," *Meyers grosses Konversations-Lexikon*, vol. 12, 6th edition (1905), 526.

however, the modern metropolis, more than perhaps anything else, effectively decoupled love and sex to a greater extent than ever before. Prostitution, fleeting liaisons, and pragmatic (and sexual) unions forged out of economic necessity (to able to afford an apartment, for example) all in a way moved sex further away from at least the idea of the loving marital bed, and even though love and sex surely continued to go hand in hand for some, the inverse was potentially true for a great many others. By that same token, intimacy (by which I mean physical or emotional closeness) acquired a new set of meanings in the city, which, for some, anyway, rendered scarce close, physical and emotional connection with others. Intimacy, as I use it throughout this dissertation, is located somewhere between love and sex on a spectrum of emotions, though it is perhaps harder in the abstract to isolate intimacy from either love or sex. After all, one often found intimacy in loveless sex, and it is intriguing to consider the massive business of urban prostitution at the turn of the century as not just an economic exchange but also the search for physical and/or emotional intimacy.

Of course, we must also confront the complexity of same-sex love in an age when both sex and marriage were illegal and had instead to exist in a sort of liminal and, in every case, shadowy and risky space beneath the gaze of the public eye. This dissertation is keenly interested in the contours of same-sex love and intimacy in turn-of-the-century Berlin, for not only was it *the* story of "love in the big city" for a not insignificant portion of Berlin's residents; but same-sex love also in many ways reflects doubly the problems, anxieties, strategies, and ambiguities of love, respectability, and risk at the turn of the century. After all, the city may in some sense have opened new horizons of opportunities for gays and lesbians when compared with the smaller towns and villages of the sort that Mack Walker so brilliantly dissected in his study of "German

home towns."[49] But the big city also proved doubly isolating, alienating, and even dangerous for those seeking same-sex love, for the obstacles to meeting someone were not only urban realities but also deeply entrenched cultural biases and long-standing legal statutes with serious punishments.

Readers will not find a chapter or section of this dissertation dedicated to the men and women who navigated the tricky world of same-sex relationships, however; instead, their story is (very intentionally) woven into the same fabric as our discussion of straight love, for they were and are of the same cloth, and same-sex intimacies illustrate with particular clarity the larger trends under study here. Love and intimacy perhaps took slightly different forms for same-sex lovers in *some* circumstances, but connection, closeness, belonging and stability in many ways meant the same thing for straight and same-sex couples alike. As such, and recognizing the importance of recovering a specifically and uniquely gay history of the modern world, this dissertation seeks to move beyond what might be described as the ghettoization of gay history from straight history. The very real differences in gay and straight experiences must, of course, never be effaced, and I take Karin Hausen's point about the importance of highlighting the differences and inequalities of the past and the risks of returning to a sort of universal history á la Friedrich Schiller.[50] I would suggest, however, that insisting on a strict boundary between straight and same-sex histories merely reinforces the long-standing isolation of these experiences

[49] Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1971). On the plethora of new opportunities for same-sex love created alongside the modern metropolis, see chapters two and four of this dissertation; also Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe*; Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Robert Beachy, "The German Invention of Homosexuality," *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (2010): 801-838.

[50] Karin Hausen, "Die Nicht-Einheit der Geschichte als historiographische Herausforderung. Zur historischen Relevanz und Anstößigkeit der Geschlechtergeschichte," in Hausen, *Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, 371-391.

as mutually unintelligible when there were, in fact, a whole host of fascinating and illuminating similarities. Exploring them together – and dissecting their similarities and differences – helps us better understand not only both experiences separately but also the broader dynamics of past contexts and cultures as a whole – how, in the example of turn-of-the-century Berlin, the city itself in many ways "queered" the search for and experience of love for men and women, regardless of their sexual orientation. The time has come to merge these stories, and love may well offer the perfect analytical lens to do so.[51]

Love – whether straight or same-sex – is in any case difficult to pin down in historical sources, however, and it seems fitting to refer here to the opening line of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."[52] All happy lovers may not be alike, but they often produce little by way of concrete evidence of their love. Unhappy lovers, on the other hand (not to mention the lovesick, broken-hearted, and vengeful) tend to leave behind an impressive trail of material, and this is, in some ways, the conundrum of examining love at the turn of the century. Throughout this dissertation, I rely as much on sources that were produced in the absence of love (or as it was ending) as I do texts composed or created in the delirium of found love; and since love as such is so rarely the subject of historical sources, I have had to look to other registers of love, as well: marriage, dating and courting, intimacy, sex, divorce, murder, crime, the law, and even death. In fact, this is precisely why the following chapters are organized as they are. In telling the story of love in turn-of-the-

[51] The gender theorist, R. W. Connell has in some ways taken the first steps in this sense with regard to masculinity – or masculinities in the plural, as Connell famously proposed. Rather than writing a history of gay men as entirely distinct from the history of straight men, Connell has, in a variety of contexts, modeled analyzing the multi-faceted experience of men in terms of constellations of masculinities that evolve in intertwined and reflexive ways. R. W. Connell, "A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender," *American Sociological Review* 57, no. 6 (1992): 735-751; R. W. Connell., *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[52] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Penguin, 2000), 1.

century Berlin, I have had to approach it from the angles of loneliness and desire; dating and individualization; bachelorhood, spinsterhood, and "free love"; newspaper personal ads; and a particularly fascinating criminal trial. In weaving together each chapter, each aspect of love in the modern city, I have tried to portray the totality, complexities, and tensions of love in Berlin around 1900.

Of course, it is also true, as Claire Langhamer has observed, that "we undoubtedly know a great deal more about how ordinary people were instructed to behave in their emotional worlds than about the messiness of actual emotional practice," and this is one of the central problems of the historical study of love and of emotions, more generally.[53] This dissertation draws together a significant number of first-hand accounts, memories, and imaginings about love at the turn of the century, but it is equally reliant upon newspaper columns, advice literature, and popular commentary about what love should or should not have been. Untangling and evaluating these sources can be tricky, but the methodological and theoretical approaches of a growing number of studies on the history of emotion are useful guides for dissecting these sources, for they have been largely successful writing history "from the inside out"[54] – that is, making sense of broader social, cultural, political, and intellectual contexts through the lens (or "thought material")[55] of

[53] Claire Langhamer, "Everyday love and emotions in the 20th century," in Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (eds.), *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium* (2013), http://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com /history-from-below/.

[54] Susan J. Matt, "Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out," *Emotion Review* 3, no. 1 (2011), 118.

[55] William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

such emotions as anger, jealousy, fear, trust, and even equanimity, to name but a few.[56] Barbara Rosenwein's suggestion (like R. W. Connell's for masculinit*ies*) that, in any given context, there is not a single hegemonic emotion (or emotional style) but instead multiple emotional communities, is especially helpful in unraveling something as elastic as love, as are both William Reddy's notion of "emotional regimes" as hegemonic modes of emotional expression and Ute Frevert's reminder that emotions themselves are gendered.[57] Love, not surprisingly, has attracted the attention of more than a few scholars over the years, though a good many of these studies are interested more in the *longue-durée* nature of love itself than in what the navigation of love reveals about a particular social group or setting, as is the focus here.[58] David Konstan's work on *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* is worth highlighting, however, for he points out that love, at least as a discursive emotion (what Reddy calls an "emotive"),[59] is itself hardly a given and only gradually acquired the many meanings we will see it carry in this dissertation.[60] Similarly,

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[56] For example, Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1986); Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, *Jealousy: The Evolution of an Emotion in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1989); Joanna Bourke, *Fear: a Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2006); Ute Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen. Eine Obsession der Moderne* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013); Peter Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

[57] Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 921-945; Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 128-129; Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2011), chapter two.

[58] For example, Simon May, *Love. A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Marcus Collins, *Modern Love. An Intimate History of Men and women in Twentieth-century Britain* (London: Atlantic, 2003); Lisa Appignanesi, *All About Love: Anatomy of an Unruly Emotion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); William Reddy, *The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia, and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005). Two notable exceptions to this trend are Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

[59] Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 105.

[60] David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

Luisa Passerini's cultural and intellectual history of love is also noteworthy, for she demonstrates quite convincingly the way the idea of love – and a particular kind of love, at that – was and is inextricably linked to national (and continental) identity in Europe.[61] This is an instructive and guiding point for our examination of love in the big city, for even though Berliners only rarely invoked Germanness when debating the contours of love, we can be sure that their local identity as Berliners was tied up in a specific regime of love (to borrow from Reddy) that looked and acted a certain way. Love in Berlin was at once unabashedly liberated and yet endangered by the city, and the unease and tensions this incongruity engendered is one of the central themes of this dissertation.

Perhaps no source or person exemplifies these tensions more clearly than Frieda Kliem, whose story contains so many elements of love's complexity and contentiousness at the turn of the century. Frieda's experience is supremely illustrative in other ways, too, and not simply, as we pointed out earlier, because her file at the state archive offers such a rare glimpse into the emotional life of a relatively ordinary person who was clinging, as so many did, to a middle-class lifestyle that was slipping out of her fingers. In fact, it is actually worth lingering on the *extra*ordinary side of Frieda Kliem's life – her brief and tragic appearance as a newspaper celebrity – for a moment, for it raises an important methodological and theoretical point about the ever-tricky nature of narrative and discourse. Berliners learned about Frieda Kliem's murder because they read about it in Berlin's ubiquitous daily newspapers, which, of course, picked up the story and provided readers with updates, background information, important discoveries, and surprising twists along the way. Newspapers were an essential and celebrated part of the modern city (most spectacularly so when a woman dressed up as the *Berliner Morgenpost* for a

[61] Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

masquerade ball in 1902),[62] for not only did reading newspapers become one of the most universal urban experiences, as Peter Fritzsche demonstrated so eloquently, but the newsprint itself – what Fritzsche calls the "word city" – constructed a new layer of meaning for Berlin that, day after day, edition after edition, shaped and transformed the way Berliners understood the city around them.[63] And while the newspaper, "with its adventurous layout, short and discontinuous reportage and frequent daily editions, more nearly corresponded to the provisional and fragmentary nature of the city," as Fritzsche writes, the "word city," that is, the Berlin that existed in the columns of the daily newspapers, did not map perfectly onto the real Berlin in which people like Frieda Kliem worked and danced and moved about;[64] after all, it was a stylized, imagined, and emplotted narrative city, one that registered the predilections of the writers and marketed itself to its readers; one that was fit to deadlines and the moods of editors and squeezed into last bits of free space on a page. But because the narrative newspapers created about the city had as much to do with how Berliners actually experienced it as anything else, this "word city" was more than just a layer of descriptive text in the urban environment; it was, instead, a line of discourse woven deeply throughout the fabric of modern city life, one that formed a reciprocal relationship with the city insofar as it both described and shaped Berlin around 1900. "[The] city as place and the city as text," Fritzsche writes, "defined each other in mutually constitutive ways."[65]

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[62] "Frauen auf dem Maskenball," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 February 1902, Nr. 30.

[63] Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1-2.

[64] Peter Fritzsche, "Vagabond in the Fugitive City: Hans Ostwald, Imperial Berlin and the *Grossstadt-Dokumente*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 3 (1994), 385.

[65] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 1. See also Steinberg, *Petersburg fin de siècle*, 34-35.

Berliners, in other words, talked about their city and about themselves, and the text and discourse this created was a crucial part of what it meant to live in a city that was on the cutting edge of modernity. As Fritzsche puts it, the word city "guided and misguided its inhabitants [and] fashioned the nature of metropolitan experience."[66] Klaus Scherpe's phrasing of this point is also instructive, for he observes that while "'the city,' as a projection screen for meanings, is in no way identical to the actual city [...], *fantasies about the city are no less real for that*."[67] This was particularly true in matters of love and intimacy, for so much of one's tastes, habits, ideals, norms, and practices was molded by the material he read and the fantasies he (or those around him) erected for himself. Indeed, whether it was a news story about a personal ad swindling, an advice column about the propriety of bicycle riding, a readers' forum on making potentially intimate acquaintances on the street, a front-page column about men who avoided marriage and opted to extend their bachelorhood, or a serial novel about a workplace romance – these not only shaped the way Berliners thought about love and intimacy in their city; they also influenced the way men and women reacted to and looked for love in their own lives. After all, they, too, were part of the city, and they made sense of their own lives – even, as we will see in each chapter, their love lives – according to the narrative of love in the big city.

It is nevertheless important to hold narrative and practice in tension when examining Berliners' lives at the turn of the century, for as much of a role Berlin's narrative about itself had in influencing real life, that narrative was still exactly that: a construction. We must not mistake the "word city" for the bricks and mortar Berlin, as compelling as it indeed was. "The many links between the real city and the word-city," writes Burton Pike, "are indirect and complex, and not,

[66] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 1.

[67] Emphasis added. Klaus R. Scherpe, "Modern and Postmodern Transformations of the Metropolitan Narrative," *New German Critique* 55 (1992), 71.

as they might at first appear, simple references from one to the other."[68] When newspapers wrote about so-called eternal bachelors, for example, it was easy to believe that all Berliners had abandoned marriage for good. So, too, did columns about old maids, swindlers, modern girls, frustrated singles, and the disappearance of "mother's way" make it seem as if each of these trends was completely taking over the city. In reality, these were, for the most part, exceptional phenomena that were remarkable precisely because they were emerging but minority trends. It was quite the same with the ubiquitous talk of newness, which, the panoply of changes at the turn of the century notwithstanding, was as much the reimagining of the old as new as it was actual revolutionary change. Finding love in the big city *was* a problem, a perplexing and supremely frustrating quandary, even, but most Berliners, in fact, did find love or at least got married and found some measure of intimacy. In the same way, Berlin *was* forever becoming, as it were, but it did so on the back of this fascination with the struggle between old and new. Statistics, though they may seem cold and calculating, are no doubt a discourse, a narrative like anything else, but we can rely reasonably upon them to see that connection and marriage were not dying out but actually relatively healthy as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, just as we can see that Berlin was, strictly speaking, not taking on a dramatically new face each day. With that in mind, the problem of love and the rise of the new in the modern city were exceedingly important narratives in turn-of-the-century Berlin, and even if most Berliners found spouses, even if the new really was simply the old in new packaging, the centrality of these discourses influenced the way Berliners lived their lives, raised their children, played

[68] Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), x.

matchmaker with their friends, and even understood their own relationships.[69] For that matter, as Pike points out, the way Berliners talked about their city is revealing not only of their values and assumptions, but also the prevailing urban "psychology" of Berlin.[70] Urban narratives (the "word city," as it were) were simply the product or "vocabulary" of how Berliners "express[ed] what [they] imagined the entire city to be," and the same, of course, applies to the part of those narratives that had to do with love.[71]

As such, the narratives of love and modernity in Berlin demand our attention, and we will do best if we situate these particular newspaper tropes – this word city – against the many other sources of romantic discourse at the turn of the century, whether those were novels, plays, scientific articles, literary journals, diaries, memoirs, or police reports. These appear throughout this dissertation, though not to the same extent as the newspapers. Daily newspapers do, in fact, offer the richest collection of everyday, ordinary lives from this era, and they (alongside the serialized novels and feuilletonistic sketches that appeared in them) captured working- and lower-middle-class life with such detail that they are probably the best analogue to Theodore Dreiser's portraits of the same class in *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925). This dissertation thus relies heavily on newspapers, which is a very intentional methodological strategy based not only on Fritzsche's argument in *Reading Berlin 1900* but also on my conviction, after reading through each section of each day's newspaper for Berlin's most popular dailies (the *Berliner Morgenpost* and the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*) from 1898 to 1914, that the

[69] As Iain Boyd Whyte and David Frisby point out, narratives of Berlin "became transposed into urban imaginaries that drew out largely negative features of the new metropolis within which were embedded the dystopian dimensions of a threatening urban modernity." Iain Boyd Whyte and David Frisby (eds.), *Metropolis Berlin, 1880-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 10.

[70] Pike, *The Image of the City*, xi.

[71] Ibid., 10.

newspapers contain a stylized but unparalleled glimpse into the dynamics of turn-of-the-century metropolitan life. The articles, columns, readers' letters, and serial novels that form the foundation of the following analysis are not the eccentric writings of anomalous, aberrant individuals; they are, rather, representative products that circulated by the millions throughout the city and formed the basis for many more conversations around dinner tables, in the seats of trams and buses, and at cafés and bars throughout the city. They also prompted responses, dialogues, and debates that found their way back into the newspaper, and these moments allow us to observe first-hand the way that newspaper copy was digested, perceived, and measured against reality, even if things like letters to the editor were naturally also selected and shaped by the editors of those sections.

Newspapers, then, when layered with the many other texts of the era, provide the most useful, illustrative glimpse into the unremarkable, the quotidian, and the majority experience of turn-of-the-century Berlin. Of course, we must acknowledge the fact that Berlin's major newspapers – the *Berliner Morgenpost* and the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* – naturally catered to their predominately working-class readership (Berlin was heavily working-class, after all).[72] And yet, lest we dismiss newspapers as unrepresentative of Berlin, we must recall the hegemonic pull of middle-class normativities and the fact that newspapers, in the stories they covered, the features they ran, and the viewpoints they presented, not only reinforced the allure of middle-class*ness* but also seem to have addressed primarily those Berliners who were poised to achieve middle-class status or who teetered on the edge of losing it; people, in short, like Frieda Kliem, who was frankly hanging for dear life on the last rung of middle-class respectability, and who,

[72] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 114, 162; see also Josef Mooser, *Arbeiterleben in Deutschland, 1900-1970: Klassenlagen, Kultur und Politik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 50.

having been raised middle-class before setting out on her own, wanted so desperately to hold on to the cache of that middle-class*ness*.

At the same time, Berlin, as we will see in Chapter One, was itself unique, remarkable, and celebrated, and for good reason: it was regarded as the most electric, dynamic, and fluid city in all of Europe and may have even been the world's most modern city. In some ways, this dissertation is as much about Berlin as it is about love and intimacy, for Berlin is the backdrop to the scenes of love and intimacy that play out in these pages. The amorous movements of its residents made up an important part of the physiognomy of turn-of-the-century Berlin, and to follow men and women as they met in the Tiergarten, filled dance halls in the suburbs, bicycled along forest paths, and socialized in gay bars and at masquerade balls is to become acquainted with an aspect of the city that has been buried for some time. In fact, we might adjust Walter Rathenau's assertion in his 1899 article, "The Most Beautiful City in the World" – namely that, "Strictly speaking, Berlin the metropolis does not exist" outside of the goings on of its industry – and suggest that the city existed (or better, came to life) not only in the activity of its industry but also (and a great deal more interestingly) in the ways in which Berliners loved and grew intimate with one another.[73]

And yet, its explicit focus on Berlin notwithstanding, this dissertation is also about more than Berlin, more than any one city at the turn of the century. Indeed, it is about urban environments and the way urbanites navigated a path through and around them, how they interacted with each other, and how they narrated their experience, and Berlin, in this sense, is

[73] Walther Rathenau, "Die schönste Stadt der Welt," *Die Zukunft* 26 (1899): 36-48, quoted in Iain Boyd Whyte and David Frisby (eds.), *Metropolis Berlin, 1880-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 214.

emblematic of the turn-of-the-century metropolis.[74] The evolving pressures and impulses of city life, the complicated relationship between twentieth-century Europeans and their nineteenth-century roots, and the always-tricky negotiation of class and gender normativities – these were, of course, present in any number of turn-of-the-century cities.[75] Paris and London no doubt count as the typical nineteenth-century capitals, and it is not insignificant that Walter Benjamin – a Berliner by birth – picked Paris for the centerpiece of his study of nineteenth-century urbanity (indeed, as the "Capital of the Nineteenth Century").[76] Other scholars, too, have chosen other sites for their studies of turn-of-the-century modernist culture, and often with good reason.[77] But the characteristics that made twentieth-century cities distinct, whether the unprecedented intra-city mobility, a lack of sustained connections to the surrounding countryside, or a self-consciously urban culture – these were present in Berlin in unique ways (whereas in turn-of-the-century St. Petersburg, for example, a massive part of the population left the city and returned to the country villages; and Parisians, for their part, were less mobile and often did not stray far from the neighborhoods and enclaves in which they worked and had family connections). Indeed, as Iain Boyd Whyte and David Frisby write, there was "by the late nineteenth century [...] one European city in particular whose astonishing growth in only a few decades came to

[74] For further discussion of Berlin's exceptional and emblematic newness, see Fritzsche, "Vagabond in the Fugitive City," 386.

[75] See, for example, Zhao Ma, "Down the Alleyway: Courtyard Tenements and Women's Networks in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing," *Journal of Urban History* 36 (2010): 151-172; Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Finn, "Sex and the City"; David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London, 1840-1930* (London: Reaktion, 1998); Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

[76] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts," in *Das Passagen-Werk*, vol. 5.1 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1982): 45–59.

[77] For example, Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*; or Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Steinberg, *Petersburg fin de siècle*.

embody and symbolize the most modern city: Berlin."[78] Arthur Eloesser wrote in 1909 that "Berlin is simply everywhere a big city, and there is no other metropolis that has eliminated so recklessly the cozy existence of rural and small-town idylls."[79] Berlin was, in many ways, the modern urban theorist's dream, what with the rapid rate of its growth, its overwhelmingly young, fluid, and unattached population base, and the fact that these new Berliners did not self-segregate into ethnic neighborhoods. There was also, as Peter Fritzsche points out, the fact that Berlin, unlike London or Paris or Vienna, was so self-consciously modern. "What sets Berlin apart," Fritzsche writes, "is not so much the intensity of industrial development as the city's almost exclusive identification with it."[80]

Not surprisingly, Berlin attracted the attention of some of the most insightful urban sociologists, theorists, and philosophers of the early twentieth century, including Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, or Siegfried Kracauer, and its newspapers were filled with notes and travel reports by visitors from all over the world, visitors who had come to behold Berlin for themselves.[81] Berlin may, indeed, have been the first real destination for sex tourism, as Berlin authorities observed nervously at the time.[82] And while talk about Berlin ranged from concern to fascination, nearly all voices concluded that Berlin was a sort of hyper-charged modern

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[78] Whyte and Frisby, *Metropolis Berlin*, 1.

[79] Arthur Eloesser, *Die Straße meiner Jugend. Berliner Skizzen* (Berlin: Das Arsenal, 1987), 33.

[80] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 7-8.

[81] Of course, not all observers (or Berliners) were quite so happy about the explosion of old Berlin into a modern metropolis, and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries featured no small amount of anti-urbanist literature. Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); see also Andrew Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), especially 82-90.

[82] Police report, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16927. More generally, see Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany*.

metropolis, one in which the dynamics of modern urban life were as clear to see as anywhere else in the world. We can thus be confident that while our focus here is very specifically Berlin, our findings will be illustrative for a variety of other urban contexts, as well.

Put differently, the specific qualities of Berlin life exemplify turn-of-the-century metropolitan and urban worlds, more generally, and the Berlin we see in this dissertation is best understood as part of a larger typology, one that includes not only the standard list of great European cities but also a wide variety of urban contexts from Shanghai to Buenos Aires to Krakow.[83] To be modern, to be urban – these were about much more than growth or industrialism or technology or the western hemisphere; the modern metropolis engendered an aesthetic all its own, a quality of living, patterns of expression, and modes of interaction. Berlin cannot, of course, speak for the entire realm of meanings and methods of the modern world; but in exploring one aspect of turn-of-the-century urban life – love – this dissertation aims at defining some of the contours of this typology based on one of the most exemplary metropolitan environments: Berlin.

It is these tensions between exceptional and representative, discourse and reality, and ordinary and celebrity (not to mention the complexities of modernity, class, gender, and urbanization) that are woven through each chapter of this dissertation, and this fits perfectly with Frieda Kliem. Frieda was at once a celebrity and a totally unknown seamstress; her life was very real, yet we know about it only in stylized, narrated, and emplotted forms; and while Frieda's life was so representative for the way Berliners lived and loved, her tragic struggle to find love, not

[83] For example, Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial Shanghai, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Adriana Bergero, *Intersecting Tango. Cultural Geographies of Buenos Aires, 1900-1930* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); David Crowley, "Castles, Cabarets, and Cartoons: Claims on Polishness in Kraków around 1905," in Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward (eds.), *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present*, (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1999), 101-117.

to mention her violent death at the hands of a personal ad killer, were exceptional. I have structured the dissertation in such a way as to harness these tensions and use them to achieve a deeper, more nuanced analysis of love in turn-of-the-century Berlin. Each chapter opens with a period of Frieda's life and then zooms out to explore the various themes with which that part of her life intersects. Chapter One, for example, begins with Frieda's arrival in Berlin and follows her as she struggles to fit herself to the urban environment, economy, and interpersonal dynamics. Hers was the experience of so many other Berliners, and the chapter thus focuses on "The Big City" and all of its problems, opportunities, allures, and strictures. Chapter Two sees Frieda finding her footing a little and stepping outside the lines of acceptable femininity and respectability as she pursued avant-garde paths towards a "Modern Love" that was, as the chapter goes on to explore, more fleeting and individualistic than the traditional avenues. Frieda's prospects for marriage – and its alternatives – form the beginning of Chapter Three, which examines "The Problem of Marriage" and the debate sparked by the growing number of Berliners who sought to revise long-standing beliefs about marriage and adapt them to the modern world. Chapter Four takes off in the heat of the investigation into Frieda's murder, pans around to explore her use of newspaper personal ads, and then examines both matchmaking services and personal ads as "Emerging Technologies of Love" that represented revolutionary approaches to love and dating in the modern metropolis. Chapter Five, finally, dives into the fascinating trial of Frieda Kliem's murderer and, after analyzing the legal strategy of the defense attorney, courtroom exchanges between judge and defendant, and the trial's dramatic ending, concludes by considering the risks and rewards of "Confronting the Modern World" and its reigning ideologies in the hopes of finding love in the big city.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BIG CITY

Arrival in Berlin

April 13th was Berlin's first truly nice day of 1902, and with the pleasant weather and a Sunday afternoon to spend relaxing, Berliners spread out all over the city. The newspaper reported the following Tuesday that nearly 1.2 million people had ridden public transit on that Sunday, making it one of the heavier travel days in recent memory.[1] The city was alive again after a cold winter, and many of those 1.2 million commuters had, no doubt, taken the opportunity of the good weather to head to the Grunewald forest in the western suburbs. Others perhaps went southwest to the Wannsee, though it would have been far too cold for swimming. Still others might simply have gone for the 1902 equivalent of the "Sunday drive" – a pleasure ride on the elevated "ring" train, for here one had a wonderful bird's eye view onto the city below. The eastern section of the elevated train had opened for the first time only four weeks earlier, and the stretch as a whole was already transporting some 50,000 riders each day.[2] Some of the 1.2 million riders that day in April were arriving in Berlin for the first time, and one of those riders may have been Frieda Kliem, arriving from the Brandenburg town of Wilsnack some 75 miles northwest of Berlin. Frieda was 27 years old, and her arrival in Berlin in 1902 was more a homecoming than a first arrival. After all, she had been born in the Berlin suburb of Pankow, and her train ride from Wilsnack to Berlin probably went right through her old stomping grounds. Frieda actually knew Berlin quite well, having spent her first 14 years there. Her parents ran a large and successful nursery in Pankow, and, had Frieda kept herself out of trouble, she probably could have stayed there and enjoyed a rather comfortable lower-middle-class

[1] "Berliner Verkehrszahlen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 15 April 1902, Nr. 174.

[2] H.K., "Ein Jahr elektrischer Hochbahn," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 February 1903, Nr. 79.

existence. But Frieda apparently tried the patience of her parents from early on, so she spent her teenage years bouncing around between the homes and shops of various relatives. Indeed, Frieda's parents had finally chosen to remove her from Berlin altogether and send the 14-year-old Frieda to her grandparents' house in Wilsnack. Her walk to school, they had said, was too far and allowed her to get into too much trouble.[3]

So Frieda moved in with her grandparents in the sleepy Prussian town of Wilsnack and eventually went to work in her Aunt Marie's sewing shop. At some point, though, Frieda proved too troublesome for even her aunt, and both decided it was best for Frieda to move on her own to Berlin. This no doubt appealed to Frieda, who, in her aunt's words, had always wanted to live in Berlin. So Frieda quit her job in Wilsnack and, in 1902, joined the thousands of men and women who left the provinces and sought work and opportunity in the rapidly expanding metropolis.[4]

Like these thousands and thousands of newcomers, Frieda's first step was to look for the two markers of stability in what was then widely known as the "struggle for existence," namely, an apartment and work. It is not clear in what order Frieda found them, but she eventually moved into an apartment at Graunstrasse 72 in the working-class neighborhood of Wedding.[5] The fact that she was not registered with the city until 1905 – a full three years after her arrival – suggests that she may have bounced around from apartment to apartment, living with distant relatives or in short-term arrangements that did not occasion a listing in the Berlin white pages (*Adressbücher*).[6] It is possible that Frieda moved to Graunstrasse 72 because of work (having

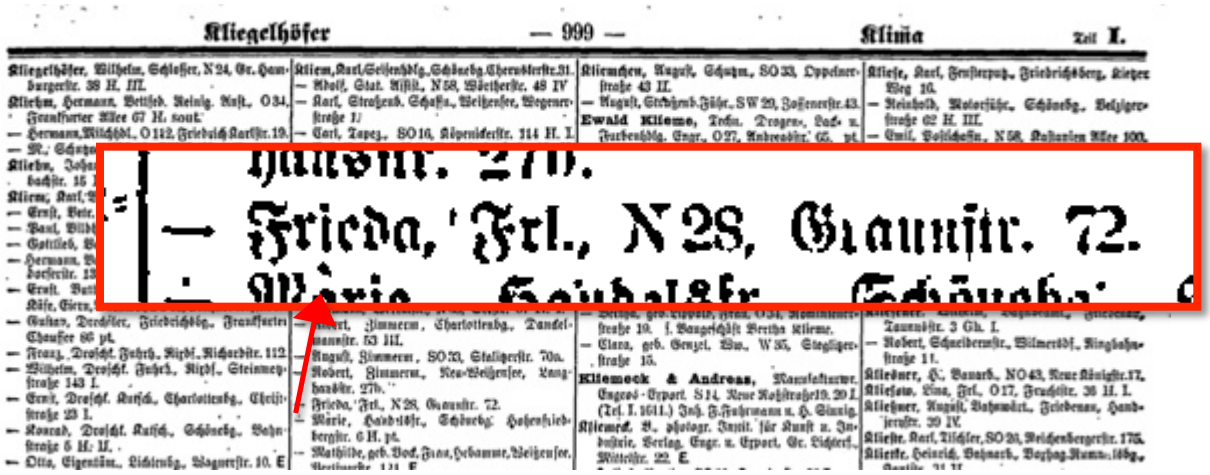
[3] Statement by Frau Dr. Selma Fischer, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 22.

[4] Ibid.

[5] *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1905. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, 999.

[6] *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1902-1904. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin.

Figure 1.1: Frieda Kliem's first apartment in Berlin at Graunstrasse 72.



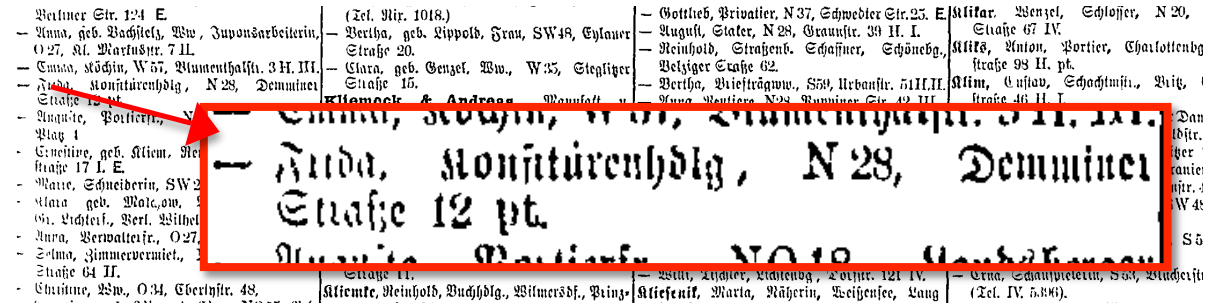
(Source: *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1905. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, 999.)

found, for example, a listing in the newspaper classifieds), though it is equally likely that she found her first job precisely because she lived near her future employer. In any case, Frieda took a job working for a woman named Hedwig Rohls, a seamstress who lived just a few buildings away from Frieda at Graunstrasse 42.[7] Rohls was a landlord and a business owner and ran a clothing store out of her apartment. Frieda thus found her first job in Berlin doing what she knew best: sewing. Frieda and Hedwig even became close friends – close enough that, when Frieda's parents passed away in 1903 or 1904, she asked for a lump sum payout of her inheritance so that she could help Hedwig out with a loan. Indeed, she ended up loaning her well over 1,000 Marks. Their friendship and partnership was cut short, however, when Hedwig was suddenly murdered. As it turned out, Hedwig, a widow, had been shot and killed by her lover.[8] Frieda never recovered the loan she had given to her former boss and friend, and now she was without work, too.

[7] *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1902. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, 1395; Statement by Frau Dr. Selma Fischer, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 22.

[8] Statement by Frau Dr. Selma Fischer, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 22.

Figure 1.2: Kliem's very own clothing store.



(Source: *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1907. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, 1143.)

Facing yet again the uncertainty of getting by on her own and surviving the "struggle for existence," Frieda proved resourceful (as she would so many times throughout her life) and tapped into the entrepreneurial spirit of her parents. She decided she would open her own clothing store. This move in many ways made sense, for she had seen Hedwig – also a single woman – run her own shop for a few years, and she still had a little bit left of the 5,000 Mark lump sum inheritance she had received from her parents. So in 1906, the year Hedwig was murdered, Frieda left Graunstrasse 72 and moved into her own place at Demminerstrasse 12, just a few blocks south, and started her own business. But this, too, proved short-lived, as Frieda was not really able to make ends meet on her own in a competitive market. She soon ran out of money and had to close her shop, and Frieda was again without work.[9]

Frieda's plight – no savings, hardly any income – was the plight of so many single, working-class women in Berlin at the turn of the century, and we must remember, as Frieda certainly did, that she, in her rather destitute and precarious position, had fallen a good distance from her on all accounts comfortable, lower-middle-class upbringing. Indeed, this is an important tension in her story, to wit, the lifestyle and sensibilities she knew and wanted and the

[9] *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1907. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, 1143; Statement by Frau Dr. Selma Fischer, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Pr. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 22.

all too real economic and employment obstacles that stood in her way. But marriage, an important aspect of middle-class life and stability, offered a solution to her situation, and it is clear that, at this point in her life, Frieda turned to this one remaining possibility that was, she knew, shrinking with each year as she entered her thirties. Not that Frieda was only interested in marriage because of money; but, having tasted the independence – and risk – of owning and running her own business, Frieda was perhaps ready to trade in her freedom for companionship and security, for the peace of mind that came with being taken care of, and for the cache of respectability that a (middle-class) marriage brought. Frieda does not appear to have expressed any interest in marriage during the age when most teenage girls and young women did; in fact, it is easy to imagine that the tiny hamlet of Wilsnack offered her few options or that, as a known problem child in a small town, Frieda might not have had too many suitors. Moving to Berlin no doubt brought many new opportunities for love and marriage, but Frieda was perhaps more concerned in those first few years about establishing herself and getting by. When she felt herself failing at this, she appears to have turned to the idea of marriage in earnest.

Frieda was not completely alone in Berlin, though; she had a friend, Anna Seibeke, who had also worked for Hedwig Rohls. But Frieda watched as Anna got married and either found other work or perhaps stopped working altogether, and one thinks that seeing her friend get married may, too, have increased Frieda's desire to find a husband. Anna and her husband, Oskar, felt sorry for Frieda, who had no money (she said she had been forced to spend her inheritance over the years) and who, as both Anna and Oskar later remembered, was extremely eager to get married. In fact, she talked about it all the time, telling Anna about the kind of man she wanted. And in this, it appears that Frieda was not altogether picky, though there was one important stipulation: "Frieda's wish," Anna told the police in 1914, "was to marry a civil

servant." After all, Frieda was, despite her meager income and savings, a middle-class woman who, it seems, was set on maintaining certain markers of bourgeois status (she had, for example, bits of the family silver, as well as her own piano).[10] So Anna and Oskar tried to set up Frieda with a man from the provincial town of Altlandsberg, located just outside of Berlin. But Frieda turned the offer down, telling Anna that the man was not good enough for her. Oskar remembered the same: "[It] failed because Kliem only wanted to marry a civil servant."[11]

Frieda's life up to this point can hardly be described as ideal, though there were certainly women who were worse off than she. Her failed business marked the beginning of Frieda's problems with money, and while she did continue to receive the interest on her remaining inheritance each month, she was constantly plagued by an anxiety about money and about her ability to get by. We see this most poignantly in the handful of poems she collected from magazines and quote-of-the-day calendars over the years, most of which were quite doleful and melancholy:

> *Es weiß kein Mensch wieviel ertragen [sic] kann*
> *Bis er von der Notwendigkeit es lernt*
>
> [A person does not know how much he can suffer
> until necessity forces him to learn]
>
> *Wenn kalt ein Herz sich von dir wendet*
> *Das innig du und wahr geliebt [...]*
> *Dann pflanz ein Kreuzlein an der Stätte,*
> *Die einst in Lieb' euch glücklich sah;*
> *Da weile oft in deinem Leide,*
> *Und der Verlorene ist dir nah! [...]*

[10] One thinks of the lower-middle-class clerk, Pinneburg, in Hans Fallada's 1932 novel, *Little Man, What Now?* Throughout the novel, Pinneburg struggles to accommodate his middle-class taste and aspirations with his ever-diminishing income.

[11] Statement by Oskar Seibeke, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 50.

Figure 1.3: Calendar clippings found in Frieda's apartment.

(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.)

> [When a heart turns coldly from you
> One that you truly and deeply loved
> Plant a little cross on the place
> That once saw you so happily in love;
> Pass by it often in your sorrow,
> For there the lost one is close to you!]
>
> *Vor Leiden nur kann Gott dich bewahren*
> *Unmut magst du dir selber sparen*
>
> [God alone can protect you from sorrow
> you might as well spare yourself the resentment]
>
> *Die Nachtigall singt nur im Dunklen. So lernen wir die himmlische Melodie eines edlen Herzens erst kennen, wenn es trauert.*
>
> [The nightingale only sings in the dark. In this way, we only discover the heavenly melody of a noble heart when it grieves.][12]

Every friend and acquaintance interviewed after her death noted that Frieda always complained about her financial situation and how she had to live extremely sparingly.[13] This, along with her desire to get married, was what her friends remembered most about her.[14]

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[12] Memorabilia belonging to Frieda Kliem, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[13] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-14, 23, 40-41, 43-45, 50-51, 58, 63-70, 103-110; Letter from Otto Mewes to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[14] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 33-37, 51-52, 67-70, 110-113.

Lest we dismiss Frieda as a money-grubbing opportunist or conclude that she was obsessed with money or only interested in love or marriage for the windfall or stability it might occasion, we would do well to remember her position as a single woman in the big city at the turn of the century. Frieda's thrift, contrasted against lasting images of increasingly independent women who earned their own wages and spent them on personal pleasures, might seem outdated and somewhat atypical for the period;[15] but her struggle to make ends meet as a single woman in the modern metropolis was, in fact, the most common urban experience of all. Indeed, for all of the opportunity and sheer vibrancy the birth of the modern metropolis engendered (which will be the topic of the next chapter), the city's crowds, commotion, and dynamics created, at the same time, a host of problems for the men and women who lived there. Chief among these problems were two, often related questions: *how will I get by, survive, pay for food and rent?* and *how will I ever find someone in a city of three million people?*[16] Of course, these questions were not new in 1900, and in some ways the tasks of "getting by" and finding a mate have never been easy. What was new at the turn of the century, however, was the big city.

As we will see in this chapter, the social and material conditions of urban life at the turn of the century threw into question traditional beliefs about, and paths to, love, and they led Berliners to put their faith in fate and fortuitous encounters that might lead to love, even if this faith was rarely rewarded. Life in the big city thus opened the door wider than ever before to new

[15] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

[16] Hartmut Dießenbacher phrases the question the other way around, to wit, from the side of city organizers and officials: "[Now,] A steadily decreasing death rate stood alongside a steadily growing birth rate, which raised new problems. What will become of the "surplus" population? Where should they live? Where to work? Above all: how should they feed themselves?" Hartmut Dießenbacher, "Soziale Umbrüche und sozialpolitische Antworten: Entwicklungslinien vom 19. ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert," in Gesine Asmus (ed.), *Hinterhof, Keller und Mansarde: Einblicke in Berliner Wohnungselend, 1901-1920* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1982), 10-11.

forms of love and intimacy, but the focus of this chapter is the way the modern metropolis moved Berliners to the point where they could imagine embracing them.

The Birth of the Modern, Moving Metropolis

Turn-of-the-century metropolises like Berlin (or London, Vienna, or Paris) were naturally many hundred years old, their earliest traces dating back to the medieval period, in Berlin's case, or even much earlier, in others. Indeed, Berlin in the mid-nineteenth century might have been described as a "swampy backwater."[17] Mark Twain remarked in 1891 that Berlin had not so long ago been "a dingy city in a marsh, with rough streets, muddy and lantern-lighted."[18] Yet with the industrial revolution, the invention of the railroad, and the location of factories around newly forming rail hubs, cities like Berlin were transformed. "That Berlin has disappeared," Twain continued in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* piece he penned upon returning from a half-year stay in Berlin. "It is a new city; the newest I have ever seen."[19] Berlin was frequently compared to Chicago, another upstart city in the late nineteenth century, with Walter Rathenau proclaiming in 1899 that "Athens on the Spree is dead, and Chicago on the Spree is growing up."[20] By the end of the century, a European population that was ballooning, thanks to various medical and technological improvements, could hardly resist the draw of cities, and urban centers like Berlin blossomed into truly massive metropolises. Berlin's population between 1800 and 1850 grew from 172,000 to 419,000, or just under 5% per year. Between 1850 and 1900, however, Berlin

[17] Eva-Maria Schnurr, "Teenage Angst: Berlin's Turn of the Century Growing Pains," *Spiegel Online International*, 22 November 2012, http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-late-19th-century-saw-the-birth-of-modern-berlin-a-866321.html.

[18] Mark Twain, "The Chicago of Europe," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 April 1892, 33.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Rathenau, "Die schönste Stadt der Welt," 39.

exploded to 1.89 million residents, a 351% percent increase (or over 9% each year), and Berlin was hardly done growing at this point. The 351% increase of Berlin's population in the second half of the nineteenth century dwarfs that of London (145%), Paris (158%), and Vienna (277%), making it the fastest growing major European capital in the nineteenth century.[21] Berlin's rate of growth, as compared to Paris, Vienna, and London, is even more impressive considering that most of their growth came in the mid-nineteenth century (that is, at the beginning of the 1850-1900 timeframe). Berlin, on the other hand, doubled in size in just the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Berlin was not Europe's largest city (Berlin in 1900 was less than one third the size of London), but its exponential growth gave it a unique flair. It was constantly growing, constantly moving to accommodate the thousands of new "Berliners" each month.[22] It was a dynamic city, and its dynamism played out in more than just the influx of provincials into the giant Berlin Friedrichstrasse train station. Berlin was in perpetual motion, its residents moving around the city at a dizzying pace. A remarkable and frequently cited statistic suggests that one half of all Berliners moved apartments within Berlin every six months. Statistical yearbooks bear this out: in 1900, for example, 645,185 Berliners moved to a new apartment within Berlin – roughly one-third of the city's population – though this number may not include children and spouses who

[21] Christiania, Norway (present-day Oslo) did have Berlin's 351% beat, having grown between 1850 and 1900 at the staggering rate of 714%; but it nevertheless remained in 1900 a very small "big city." Thomas Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London: Spon, 2005), 300.

[22] This newness of Berlin's residents (that is, the fact that many Berliners were not born there) remains today one of Berlin's defining characteristics. Berliners enjoy discussing when one can call himself a Berliner, many suggesting that one is a Berliner after a mere three years of Berlin residence. "New" Berliner Christian Wyrembek argued in a recent *Der Tagesspiegel* article that when one feels "at home" in Berlin, he is a Berliner. Christian Wyrembek, "Ich bin ein Berliner. Oder?" *Der Tagesspiegel*, 27 July 2011, http://www.tagesspiegel.de/meinung/andere-meinung/hauptstadtbewohner-ich-bin-ein-berliner-oder/4438004.html.

might well push the number to the estimated one-half.[23] Anecdotal evidence comes from both early sociological studies of the city's widespread housing squalor, as well as from Berlin pastor Eugen Baumann, who noted in an 1885 lecture that half of his parishioners changed their addresses during the year.[24] Berlin's singular game of musical apartments even garnered news coverage, with the *Berliner Morgenpost* reporting of moving day at the end of September, "Everywhere the streets are filled with yellow or green monsters, the moving trucks, crammed full, swaying dangerously back and forth, blocking the tracks of the electric and loathed by the taxis."[25]

Toting boxes and bed frames was, by no means, the only thing that had Berliners on the move throughout the city. Work and leisure kept city people afoot at nearly all times of the day. New York City is famously known as the city that never sleeps, but the same must be said of turn-of-the-century Berlin. Indeed, no city in Europe could claim the commotion and energy of Berlin, a fact of which Berliners were quite proud. Journalists penned stories that described "Berlin at night" in all of its frenetic splendor. The *Berliner Morgenpost*, for example, took readers on an hour-by-hour tour through the night, starting – perhaps tellingly – at 10 p.m. All through the night the city was alive with the sights and sounds of urban nightlife, it claimed. Only around 3 a.m. is Berlin relatively quiet, and at 4 a.m. "the cycle of Berlin life starts anew."[26]

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[23] *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Berlin* (Berlin: P. Stankiewicz' Buchdruckerei, 1907), 82.

[24] Albert Südekum, *Großstädtisches Wohnungselend*, vol. 45 of *Großstadt-Dokumente*, ed. Hans Ostwald (Berlin, 1908), 17; Eugen Baumann, "Die zunehmende Beweglichkeit der Bevölkerung," 14, quoted in Hugh McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London, and New York* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), 11.

[25] G. E., "Oktober-Umzug," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 13 September 1900, Nr. 214. On the spectacle of moving day and the role of the daily newspapers in covering them, see Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 120.

[26] Sylvester, "Berlin bei Nacht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 February 1899, Nr. 48.

Figure 1.4: View onto the bustling Potsdamer Platz from Café Josty, 1914.

(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin F Rep. 290 (01), Nr. OO72473.)

Berlin during the day was just as busy, with people, goods, and vehicles whizzing through streets, across squares, and up and down flights of stairs. An article in the *Berliner Zeitung* from 1905 helps us get a feel for the movement and crowds – not to mention the pride they engendered in Berliners – of a normal day on Potsdamer Platz, a veritable beehive of activity both day and night. Here the author perched himself in the famous Café Josty and counted the vehicles moving by in the span of one hour: "416 streetcars, 146 omnibuses, 564 taxis and cars […] and 118 three-wheelers. Together that makes in one hour 1836 vehicles, in one day – based on an 18-hour day – that makes 33,048, in one month 991,440, in one year nearly 12 million vehicles." But what if we want a tally of individual people walking about Potsdamer Platz? "Impossible. Each minute brings new masses of people, from the right, from

the left, they come from all sides, forming each second a new image. The elegant world, laboring Berlin, the worker, the salesman, the intellectual -- -- an extract of Berlin's entire population moves across Potsdamer Platz, a colorful jumble, a swarm as in an ant house."[27] "Potsdamer Platz," as another writer put it, "that is Berlin. The typical modern Berlin, this is what they can't replicate out in the other cities. On Potsdamer Platz you can hear the heartbeat of the world."[28]

Indeed, Berlin was in many ways unlike any other city in Europe. It had a dynamism, a liveliness that was the envy of Paris and London, not to mention sleepy Vienna.[29] When Stefan Zweig described Vienna at the turn of the century, for example, it was not in terms of movement, crowds, and nightlife, but rather of measured, controlled lives, cautiousness, and temperateness.[30] Paris had its grand boulevards and fashionable clothing and London its famous West End, but Berlin was a city, truly, of the new age. And yet while Berlin was unique, it stood apart from London, Paris, and Vienna really only in the sense that its urban features – the crowds, the commotion, the sightseers, the nightlife, the crime, the prostitutes, the beggars – were exaggerated.[31] Berlin was unique, it is true, but it was more than that the modern city *par excellence*; it epitomized everything the modern metropolis was or could be. As Karl Baedeker put it in his 1912 guide to the German capital, Berlin may not "compete in antiquity or historical

[27] "Ueber den Potsdamer-Platz," *Berliner Zeitung*, 12 October 1905, Nr. 240.

[28] Dorothee Goebeler, "Berlin auf der Strasse: Der Potsdamer Platz," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 July 1913, Nr. 337.

[29] E. G., "Nachtleben der Großstadt," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 24 October 1900, Nr. 498.

[30] Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography*, trans. Harry Zohn (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964), 1-27.

[31] Indeed, even if Berlin was widely recognized as having the most fantastic and colorful nightlife, this does not mean its dynamics are atypical or unrepresentative for big cities at the turn of the century. All of the problems and opportunities of the modern metropolis were, in greater or lesser form, present in other so-called first and second rank cities around 1900. See, for example, McLeod, *Piety and Poverty*, xx; Heidrun Homburg, *Rationalisierung und Industriearbeit. Arbeitsmarkt – Management – Arbeiterschaft im Siemens Konzern Berlin 1900-1939* (Berlin: Haude und Spener Verlag, 1991), 91.

interest with the other great European capitals," but it is "the greatest purely modern city in Europe."[32]

Theorizing and Narrating the City

Berliners, proud of their city's unceasing tumult, seem to have taken a special pleasure in imagining the way newcomers to the city felt as they stepped off the train. "The streets," one writer thought, must make quite an impression on them. "Here the city of three million shows its special flavor. The newcomer is surely bewildered by the gargantuan number of pedestrians (not even at his town's marksman's festival are so many people out on the street!), the row of streetcars stretching as far as the eye can see." Buses with men reading newspapers on their roofs, countless taxis, automobiles racing by – these were the striking images of the big city, and, as city people tend to do, Berliners found a sort of perverse joy in seeing newcomers confused, panic-stricken, and lost as they tried to make sense of such a chaotic world. Indeed, when the visitor returns home to the provinces, the author concluded, he will have a hard time readjusting to normal life.[33] In the same way, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* published letters written by a provincial woman visiting Berlin, and some of the first words to flow out of her pen were, "I freely admit it to you. I am overwhelmed by the big city."[34]

Even for Berliners, though, metropolitan life was not easy. To be sure, Berliners knew their way around the city, knew precisely where the "electric" stopped (and laughed at those who misjudged it and had to run after the departing streetcar), and did not fall for the tricks of

[32] Karl Baedecker, *Berlin and its Environs*, 5th ed. (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1912), v.

[33] M. L., "Wenn Fremde nach Berlin kommen: Vergnügungen und Enttäuschungen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 March 1906, Nr. 73.

[34] Agnes Harder, "Briefe einer Provinzialin aus Berlin. II," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 July 1910, Nr. 347.

swindlers who waited at the city's train stations for clueless and unsuspecting victims. But no inside knowledge, no memorized transit schedule made it easy to live in the big city. Berliners were able to move through the city with an almost transcendent deftness, but life's more meaningful pursuits presented a challenge to even the city's seasoned veterans – a fact that was not lost on social observers at the time. Georg Simmel, the Berlin sociologist described by scholar David Frisby as the "first sociologist of modernity," was keenly interested in the effects of city life on urban dwellers.[35] Simmel, in fact, penned an article titled "The Metropolis and Mental Life," and both here and elsewhere he considered the ways in which the rhythms and schema of modern urban existence worked on the mind of the individual. Simmel described his interest in investigating "the adaptations made by the personality in its adjustment to the forces that lie outside of it."[36] The forces, in this case, were both the "swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli" occasioned by the city and the need to "organiz[e] and coordinat[e]" all of life's activities "in the most punctual way into a firmly fixed framework of time which transcends all subjective elements" as a way of coping.[37] Simmel was quick to recognize the differences between modern, urban life and traditional, rural life, noting that there is a "deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence." Whereas life in a small town "rests more on feelings and emotional relationships," the city is characterized by "the imponderability of personal relationships."[38] Simmel may have overstated slightly the divide between city and

[35] Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, 39.

[36] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," (1903) in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 11.

[37] Ibid., 13.

[38] Ibid., 12-13.

province, as there was, in fact, a certain fluidity to both and a spectrum of locations, mentalities, and interactions between them;[39] but he nevertheless concluded that the individual ultimately assumed a "blasé outlook" on all matters of life as a way of "adjusting [himself] to the content and the form of metropolitan life by renouncing the response to them."[40]

More practically, what Simmel was arguing was that the effect of the big city on the individual was to discourage interpersonal relationships and, instead, promote – again, as a coping mechanism – a "mental attitude […] of reserve." If, he pointed out, city people attempted to cultivate the same types of intimacies with the masses – "which are constantly touching one another in fleeting contact" – as they had in a small town, they would "fall into an unthinkable mental condition."[41]

Historians have generally agreed with Simmel in his rather pessimistic take on the city and its effects on interpersonal relationships. Moritz Föllmer's new book, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, focuses on the isolation and withdrawal of Berliners during the 1920s and beyond. Föllmer argues that individuality was – and is, in fact – an important part of modern, metropolitan society – a necessary part, even. But he also points out that this desire for

[39] For that matter, as William Cronon demonstrates so brilliantly with regard to turn-of-the-century Chicago, the metropolis lives and breathes through its rural surroundings. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991). On the urban/rural dichotomy, more generally, see Charles T. Stewart, Jr., "The Urban-Rural Dichotomy: Concepts and Uses," *American Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 2 (1958): 152-158; Tony Champion and Graeme Hugo (eds.), *New Forms of Urbanization: Beyond the Urban-rural Dichotomy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Norton Ginsburg, Bruce Koppel, and T.G. McGee (eds.), *The Extended Metropolis: Settlement Transition in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Jeremy Porter and Frank Howell, "On the 'Urbanness' of Metropolitan Areas: Testing the Homogeneity Assumption, 1970-2000," *Population Research and Policy Review* 28, no. 5 (2009): 589-613.

[40] Ibid., 14.

[41] Ibid., 15.

individuality quite often led to isolation, fragmentation, and even suicide.[42] Other historians have chosen to characterize the modern metropolis in a similar fashion, focusing, for example, on the dangers the big city presented to individuals. Judith Walkowitz famously described London as the "city of dreadful delight" – a city that was, at least as the narrative went, dangerous for isolated individuals, most notably women, what with its "dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth."[43] Joachim Schlör takes up the same theme in his book, *Nights in the Big* City, and details the ways in which narratives of nightlife in Paris, London, and Berlin were dominated by horror and danger.[44] And Luisa Passerini's study of *Europe in Love, Love in Europe* casts not only the city but also modernity itself as isolating.[45] This narrative of danger, murder, and isolation no doubt took its most popular form in Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in which a deafeningly modern Berlin figures literally as the main character's antagonist as he attempts to reintegrate into the world after a spell in prison.[46]

Föllmer, Walkowitz, Passerini, and Schlör all acknowledge that this notion of the city as a dangerous, alienating place was not so much a reality as a narrative, a discursive device that had uses for various groups (men wanting to control would-be independent women, for example). And yet these studies have left us believing, as Anthony McElligott puts it, "that

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[42] Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also Moritz Föllmer, "Suicide and Crisis in Weimar Berlin," *Central European History* 42 (2009), 195.

[43] Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 17.

[44] Schlör, *Nights in the Big City*.

[45] Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe*, 38-39.

[46] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf*, trans. Eugene Jolas (New York: Continuum, 2003).

alienation is the overriding experience of urban modernity."[47] In focusing on the narrative of isolation and murder, we have, indeed, failed to illuminate completely the dynamics of interaction in the city – interaction that went beyond rape, murder, or seeing someone throw herself into the river. Urban interaction was no doubt narrated and sculpted as a discourse of the city, as well; but it was also real and unavoidable. Georg Simmel himself knew perfectly well that complete isolation among the urban masses was impossible. After all, as his student, Margarete Susman, later noted, Simmel was fully immersed in urban life, and "metropolitan, lively, restless Berlin on the corner of Leipziger- and Friedrichstrasse was decisive for his life and thought."[48] Berliners inevitably came into contact with one another as they walked down the city's busy boulevards, rode the streetcar, or meandered through the *Passage* (Berlin's shopping and entertainment emporium), and these moments of closeness contrasted sharply with the isolation one normally experienced or even cultivated. Indeed, Simmel believed, as David Frisby put it, that various "neurotic forms of behavior […] result largely from the oscillation between close confrontation with object and people," on the one hand, "and an excessive distance from them," on the other.[49]

Urban Plights: Isolation, Loneliness, and Longing

If we take Simmel's perch at the corner of Leipzigerstrasse and Friedrichstrasse for a moment, we will see immediately both experiences of urban interaction: myriad brief, fleeting contact, on the one hand, and isolation, on the other. Sidewalk collisions were, of course,

[47] Anthony McElligott, *The German Urban Experience 1900-1945: Modernity and Chaos* (London: Routledge, 2001), 186.

[48] Quoted in Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, 69.

[49] Ibid., 75.

common in such a large and dynamic city; the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* recounted as a daily occurrence – a "snapshot from the street" – the story of a flâneur strolling down the sidewalk with his signature cane and impeccable outfit. Behind him walks a young woman, and a scene erupts when she is hit by the cane he swings so gratuitously.[50] Berliners also complained constantly about bumping into people on the streetcar, having their toes stepped on, or having to put up with the cigar smoke of their fellow riders.[51] Fleeting, urban interactions could also be abrasive in other ways, like, for example, the unwanted conversation of a co-passenger. The *Berliner Tageblatt* ran a story suggesting that Berliners were annoyed with anyone who wanted to converse on public transit and how most people considered a newspaper or even the diversion of looking out the window a way to avoid having to interact with others in the same car. "It's better to suppress the need to talk in the tram car," the newspaper counseled readers.[52]

The experience of being jostled and poked contrasted with isolation and loneliness, which were themes of daily life, as well.[53] One woman in her early thirties wrote into the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* seeking advice from her fellow readers about how to escape the loneliness of big city life. Signed "lonely girl," her letter detailed how terribly lonesome she was and suggested that, surely, many others shared her feelings. "Shouldn't it be possible in a big city like Berlin for women of equal rank to find social connections?" Bicycling – a truly new, modern activity at the turn-of-the-century (as we will see in Chapter Two) – is nice but too boring to do alone, she

[50] "Momentbild von der Strasse," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 July 1902, Nr. 327.

[51] Julius Knopf, "Straßenbahnskizzen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 22 August 1912, Nr. 230.

[52] "Gespräche im Stadtbahncoupé," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 8 June 1907, Nr. 285.

[53] One journalist went as far as to suggest that Berlin was so different from small towns – where gossip and nosey neighbors reigned supreme – that people often moved to Berlin to get away from this and live quiet, isolated lives. This is quite interesting, though hardly representative. Most Berliners found the isolation heartbreaking and oppressive. M. C., "Einsam gestorben in der Großstadt," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 January 1908, Nr. 51.

wrote. Going out alone or joining a club of some sort does not work, either, since "not everyone is made for dancing" and one feels too old among the much younger people who do this. "What should I do so I don't just read a little and then go to bed at 8:30?," she asked desperately.[54] The fantastic thing about the "public opinion" section of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* is that the editors published other readers' responses to letters like that of the "lonely girl," and, in this case, another woman responded with words of comfort, writing that she, too, was lonely – but a happy person who had plenty to do. She first joined a "Club for the lonely" (Germany is famously crazy about its clubs and did, indeed, have a club for everything imaginable, but this surely ranks among the most curious of the many *Vereine*), which was full of nice women and even a few men, but even here it had been hard to make any close acquaintances. She coped with her loneliness, she wrote, by volunteering and, yes, bicycling alone. "Don't mope around," she counseled. "You'll find plenty in the big city if you just look."[55]

Journalists, authors, and artists were drawn to the theme of loneliness in the big city, as well, and each city sketch, reportage, or short story strove, it seems, to emphasize the asymmetry between the giant metropolis and the tiny, isolated individual. A 1902 poem in the *Berliner Morgenpost*, for example, situated the city itself as the barrier to urban connection. It described a young man's efforts to meet Lotte, his beloved, for a rendezvous in front of the large clock on Potsdamer Platz. He races after work to the busy square, and though he can see her red cap (worn intentionally so he might recognize her), his efforts to cross Potsdamer Platz and get to her are stymied by the quintessential fixtures of the modern city: the streetcar, the omnibus, and the endless crowds of people that block his passage. He can only watch as she walks away and

[54] "Öffentliche Meinung: Einsame Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 November 1900, Nr. 530.

[55] "Öffentliche Meinung: Einsame Damen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 November 1900, Nr. 542.

leaves his life for good.[56] Others portrayed this isolation as the result of the blasé attitude that Simmel theorized so brilliantly. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's famous Berlin street scenes show crowds of men and women moving down Friedrichstrasse and across Potsdamer Platz, for example, but his subjects pass each other, as Friedrich Lenger has observed, disconnectedly and anonymously.[57] Still others focused on the internal effects of isolation. In a rather depressing Christmas day piece, Maria Janitschek described for readers the "Christmas walk of a lonely man" – a walk he takes at night, in the dark, wandering about various neighborhoods of Berlin. Nighttime strolls were by no means inherently lonely, and to drink in the visual and audible eclecticism of the city was, indeed, an aesthetic pleasure of the highest order for that modern, stylized figure, the flâneur. But for the man "who on this evening" – Christmas – "is free of any plans," strolling throughout the empty streets of the city is a sorry substitute for the scenes he watches – or imagines through closed blinds and drapes – as he looks up at the glowing and merry apartments above. The man struggles to enjoy the stories that play out for him in these rooms, hoping to see, perhaps, a "small, charming comedy," but in each case concluding that what characterizes each scene is longing – "a longing that we all know."[58]

Much like Simmel's theory about blasé attitudes, this longing was Berliners' response to the city's curious mix of fleeting contact and oppressive isolation. We see it clearly in a short story that was featured in the *Berliner Morgenpost* in 1913. The main character, Felicitas, had, like so many other women in the big city, failed to find a husband as of yet, so she "bore all of

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[56] Dr. A. Römer, "Das Rendezvous am Potsdamer Platz. Ein heiteres Strassenbild mit ernstem Hintergrund," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 December 1902, Nr. 303.

[57] Friedrich Lenger, "Grossstadtmenschen," in Ute Frevert and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.), *Der Mensch des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verlag, 1999), 291.

[58] Maria Janitschek, "Weihnachtsspaziergang eines Einsamen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 December 1900, Nr. 602.

Figure 1.5: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *People on the Street (Street Scene in Berlin)*, 1913.

(Source: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *People on the Street (Street Scene in Berlin)*, 1913, oil on canvas, 121 x 95 cm, Brücke-Museum, Berlin, Germany. Artstor. http://www.artstor.org.)

the joys and burdens of life" on her own. Indeed, contrary to her name, she was not particularly happy. She was alone, and she tried to forget her loneliness by "wander[ing] among large crowds so as to seem less conspicuous" in her aloneness. One day while walking home from work a man approached her and offered his umbrella so she could avoid the rain. She accepted, and he walked her home, telling along the way a little about his life, his work, and how he frequented the restaurant on the corner. When they reached her door, he proposed that they meet again on Saturday, and when Saturday rolled around he came and brought with him a cake. They spent the afternoon together, and he left at seven o'clock. Felicitas felt that "the time flew by too quickly," but he came the following Saturday, too – and the next, and every Saturday that followed. He told her bits of gossip from his office, how he expected to get a raise soon, and he even occasionally read to her from the newspaper. "Imperceptibly these Saturday afternoons became

her habit," and "she waited the entire week and looked forward to it as a child waits for a party." One day he came in with wet feet, his shoes having been soaked by the rain. So she knit him slippers, and each time he came they were hanging for him in front of the fire, already warm. Spring came and then summer, and she asked herself, "Do I love him?" She had to confess that she did not love him and that she only enjoyed the comfort of expecting him, of having something to look forward to, someone to talk to. But two years passed in this way, and she never thought it would end, until one day he came and greeted her and his voice sounded different. "Won't you sit down?," she asked him. "No, Felicitas, I'm in a hurry today, but I have something to say to you . . . Felicitas, I won't be able to come see you anymore. I'm getting married." He explained to her how he enjoyed immensely their Saturday afternoons together, his slippers waiting for him by the fire, reading aloud to her from the newspaper. And while he recognized that, at their age, one did not fall in love anymore, he had grown close to her because "one longs to be a little spoiled, a little pampered." In fact, he was describing a feeling that Felicitas, too, had sensed without knowing what it was.[59]

But now he was leaving, getting married – and not to Felicitas, as much sense as that might have made. After all, even though both recognized that they were not in love, they had found in each other a certain comfort, an intimacy that cut through – at least every Saturday – the pain of being alone in the big city. They had, in fact, established a sort of domestic harmony, perhaps even an approximation of what a real marriage might have been like. The fact that he was leaving Felicitas, however, made her realize the limits of a relationship that had begun as haphazardly and randomly as theirs. "These two hours each week for two years had been […]

[59] Maurice Level, "Einsamkeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 April 1913, Nr. 117, 1.

merely the illusion of domestic bliss," she realized, and now he wanted to pin down the real thing.[60]

He left soon after, and Felicitas realized that she would no longer have anything to talk about, much less anyone to talk to. "How lonely I am!," she murmured to herself. She went to the window and looked out into the rain and onto the street below. "How lonely I am!," she sighed again. "And without any effort, without any regret, almost without even wanting to, she bent over and let her head sink. Then she let out a weak sound – and fell."[61]

Felicitas's despair at the loss of her one companion – whom she had met on the street, importantly – was deep, and her grim end was one of the many literary and real-life suicides that filled the pages of short stories and local news. The newspapers even ran stories about "the dangers of loneliness" or printed headlines like "I'm alone and forgotten."[62] But there is more to these stories about random encounters and oppressive loneliness than the annoyances of big city life (being speared by a passerby's cane on a busy sidewalk, as it were) or the danger of depression and suicide. The remarkable thing about Felicitas's story is that she met the man seemingly by chance, by surprise, and in any case not by the conventional, accepted methods. She met him, after all, on the street. More to the point, he had offered her his umbrella without even knowing her name, and the fact that the author never reveals the man's name is telling. Their relationship was, in fact, practically doomed from the start because their meeting had strayed too far from the traditional pattern, and even though the man, as he told Felicitas, had found the comfort of a marriage in their Saturday afternoons with his slippers hanging by the

[60] Maurice Level, "Einsamkeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 April 1913, Nr. 117, 1.

[61] Ibid., 2.

[62] Dagobert v. Gerhardt-Amyntor, "Die Gefahren der Einsamkeit," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 January 1902, Nr. 7; "Einsam bin ich und verlassen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 July 1901, Nr. 349.

fire, it simply could not be permanent. It was fleeting – not simply because it lasted only a few hours each Saturday afternoon, but because middle-class respectability was built as much on stability as it was on comfort (and pre-warmed slippers). Stability came from meeting in society or through friends or family, not unsupervised, unauthorized, and unpublicized encounters on the street. This had not worked for either of them, the same way the matchmaking attempt by Frieda Kliem's friends had failed. The failure of the traditional methods is, in fact, the single most prominent theme regarding love in the turn-of-the-century metropolis.

Fortuitous Encounters

Felicitas's story is interesting because it plays on the tensions between traditional sensibilities and modern approaches. Felicitas and her companion do find a degree of intimacy in their Saturday afternoons, but the way they find it (the street encounter) and the contours of middle-class*ness* ultimately prevent them from making it official or permanent. Their union was, as Felicitas recognizes, a fantasy, a balm, perhaps, for the oppressive loneliness of city life. Men and women alike nevertheless continued to place a remarkable degree of hope in these chance encounters. In fact, fortuity or fate – *Zufall* – was an aspect of city life that Berliners referenced again and again, and even more common than isolation or city collisions was of the trope of the missed connection. Indeed, there was alongside the narrative of loneliness and of random encounters, alongside the longing this engendered, a sense, a hope, that these brief, chance meetings might lead to something constructive or, better yet, romantic. Berlin was full of stories about fortuitous encounters – encounters arranged or at least enabled by the big city with its masses and rhythms. There was a sense that at any time, at any point, one might run into his soul mate or even simply someone who might soften the pains of his isolation in the metropolis. These were known as "*Strassenbekanntschaften*," street acquaintances with whom one shared a

brief – though often intense – connection. Walter Benjamin famously called this "love at last sight,"[63] though Charles Baudelaire deserves the credit for poeticizing this type of relationship already in the 1860s in his poem, "To a Passer-By" ("À une passante"). "The street about me roared with a deafening sound," the poem begins. "Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief, / A woman passed, with glittering hand / Raising, swinging the hem and flounces of her skirt." The narrator sees her and is taken in by her figure and eyes. Then suddenly: "A lightning flash… then night! Fleeting beauty / By whose glance I was suddenly reborn, / Will I see you no more before eternity? / Elsewhere, far, far from here! Too late! *Never* perhaps! For I know not where you fled, you know not where I go, / O you whom I would have loved, O you who knew it!"[64] The gay poet Armand Ernesti wrote a similar poem about Berlin in 1903, a poem he called "Lost in the Maelstrom of the Capital." "He whom I will never see again, how my heart burned for you! / You are the most beautiful man on earth, and so close to me, so like me. / […] O God, how close we are connected, we were chosen for each other - / And we once found ourselves but then missed each other eternally."[65]

One story in the *Berliner Morgenpost* featured a man who accidentally grabs the wrong briefcase while leaving the streetcar on his way to work. In the briefcase is a picture of a beautiful girl, and he ultimately tracks her down and marries her.[66] In another, a young man meets his future wife because they both walk the same route into work each morning.[67] Chance

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[63] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 169.

[64] Charles Baudelaire, "To a Passer-By," in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. and edited by William Aggeler (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954), 311.

[65] Armand Ernesti, "Im Strudel der Hauptstadt verloren," *Der Eigene* 1903 (June), 424.

[66] Hugo Klein, "Furcht vor der Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 April 1904, Nr. 97.

[67] Heinrich Teweles, "Aller Liebe Anfang," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 August 1908, Nr. 179.

encounters at the post office were a common plot of short stories, as were twists of fate whereby a working-class boy who was spurned by a middle-class girl finds success as a businessman and later happens to employ the same woman's son (he, of course, promptly marries her).[68]

There were also real life stories of random, fortuitous encounters, and newspapers were quick to run them and feed Berliners' addiction to fated meetings. In one case, a man who had recently had a portrait made and given the photographer permission to display the photo in his display window heard from his friends that there was a picture of a beautiful woman next to his. Upon seeing the picture himself and being so impressed by the woman's beauty, he got her name from the photographer and ended up marrying her. The newspaper writer attributed this to the power of fate.[69] Oddball stories like these, it seems, convinced often-isolated city people that true love was out there waiting and that fate might lead it to them. They also fanned the flame of interest in "what-if"-type fantasies, and Berliners even took steps to try to foretell the work of fate. In 1907, the *Berliner Morgenpost* ran a news story about a man who had designed a penny vending machine that would show people a photo of their future mate. Wilhelm Strebel, the inventor of the machine, had acquired a pile of old personal photograph negatives at an auction and had used them to build his device, which he rented to various bars and restaurants throughout the city. The machine, which was apparently especially popular among young women, produced for a penny or two a real photograph reproduced from a randomly selected negative. Trouble arose, however, when a woman received the picture (by fate, of course) of

[68] Aimée Gaber, "Sehnsucht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23 October 1910, Nr. 291; A. Burg, "Fritz Wendekamp's Jugendliebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 September 1907, Nr. 206.

[69] "Der Photograph als Heiratsvermittler," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 August 1906, Nr. 425.

someone she actually knew and who, upon hearing that his photo was being used thusly, sued Strebel.[70]

The *Berliner Morgenpost* took up the topic of street acquaintances in an article in 1909, opening with the thesis that city people were failing to make meaningful connections. Berliners, it suggested, struggled to find mates with whom they shared a certain "poetry," but not because poetic love was a fantasy; rather, they were looking in the wrong places. Each day, the article claimed, people meet each other in the street, in the theater, in the café, and they may well be made for each other. Take, for example, the young woman walking home from work one day. She appears to be deep in thought, "perhaps she is even dreaming of the person she noticed on one of her recent Sunday outings […], perhaps somewhere on the tram, in the suburbs […]. But she had not been able to approach him because there was no opportunity and because it would not look right" for a girl to approach a man she did not know. Perhaps if they had been in "society," in polite company…. "But on the street, in a train…that would never fly!"[71]

Now let us imagine, the article continued, there is a young man out walking, as well. This man is walking in the hopes of finding someone. This has, in fact, become a routine of sorts for him, but not because he is a "Don Juan." He is, rather, "one of the many who wake up each day with full hearts and look for their soul mates but return each evening with empty hands." He has "already a hundred times looked around in his small milieu but could not find a single soul who could make his life poetic." Note, again, both the failure of the usual methods for finding connection and the resulting loneliness. "How happy he would be," it continued, "if he had found his soul mate! How often has he found instead the true curse of his suffering." But it is not his

[70] "Das Bild des Zukünftigen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 February 1907, Nr. 30.

[71] M. Warwar, "Straßenbekanntschaften," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 October 1909, Nr. 257.

fault that he is alone. It is, rather, "the big city with its colorful cluster of […] people who appear as if whirled together; the big city that keeps those who belong from finding each other." So this man has taken to the streets, as it were, to use the one advantage of the metropolis – its masses – in his favor. By now he recognizes the look on her face – namely that she will not stop on her own – and knows he has to get her to stop. So he catches up to her and stammers out an attempt at an approach: "May the lady forgive me that I bother her . . . the urgent desire to get to know you . . . sudden encounter and unexpected feelings of warmth . . . I ask politely for the honor of accompanying you . . .." The young woman, it says, "doesn't have a heart of stone – yes, she too felt something in the man's eyes; she would even like to accept his accompaniment, but . . . 'My father does not allow street acquaintances [*Strassenbekanntschaften*].'" So ends the brief contact between the two – "they who just found each other" – and since she is a respectable woman, she thanks him and heads on her own in the direction of home. "This is the poetry and tragedy of street acquaintances that do not come to fruition," the article concludes.[72]

A week later, a woman wrote into the "readers' letters" section of the *Berliner Morgenpost* (*Das Publikum*) saying she was truly glad someone treated this subject in such a reasonable manner. "It is foolish," she wrote, "that we should still think about this in such a small town, provincial way." Provincial, of course, stood for outdated, old-fashioned, clueless. "I used to think […] it was improper for a woman to react to the attempted approach of unknown men," she continued, but over time "I realized that I perhaps ruined my chance at happiness because of this." The woman goes on to describe her own "missed connection," a love that might have been. She had moved to Berlin from the provinces and, like so many others, had a hard time meeting anyone. One day while riding the streetcar she noticed that the man sitting across from

[72] Ibid.

Figure 1.6: A missed connection, perhaps? Otto Marcus, "Gross-Berlin," 1903.

(Source: *Landesarchiv Berlin* F Rep. 290, Nr. 121830.)

her appeared to be interested in her and was, in fact, quite obviously trying to work up the nerve to start a conversation with her. The woman for her part ignored him and read deeper in the newspaper. She might well have chalked up this experience to the frequent (and aforementioned) annoyances of unwanted urban encounters, except that it happened again the next day. This time she got up and moved to the balcony of the streetcar, hoping he might take the hint. He did not. In fact, undeterred, the man ratcheted up his efforts, and try as she might to avoid getting in the same streetcar as him, he seemed always to manage to make it into her streetcar, even if it meant literally ramming himself onto a nearly packed car.[73]

[73] "Das Publikum: Straßenbekanntschaften," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10 October 1909, Nr. 264.

Three years passed thusly, and the man showed remarkable persistence. One evening the woman was at a concert of the philharmonic orchestra and saw by chance an old work colleague. She had always known the woman to be single, like herself, but now she had a man with her – her husband, it turned out. She recognized the man, actually: it was the man from the streetcar. As it happened, they had met the same way – only in this case the woman had been undeterred by social conventions about street[car] acquaintances – and had gotten married. The happy couple later invited her over to their apartment, and she saw first hand how nice of a gentleman this man really was.[74]

The woman concluded by arguing that many young women – in particular those who came, as she had, to Berlin from the provinces and had no family connections in the big city – simply lacked any other means of meeting men and that Berliners should not look down on women who entertained the possibility of a street acquaintance. What had ultimately made the woman change her mind? Was it witnessing first (or, in this case, second) hand one such streetcar relationship come to pass and, even more, find great success? Was it perhaps the desperation after failing to find someone made even worse by having let such a relationship pass her by? Or had the repeated thematization (in newspapers and novels) of street acquaintances worked on her such that she had come to see the normativities of middle-class*ness* as unrealistic, stultifying, and outdated? One thinks it was likely a combination of all three.

Importantly, these dalliances with fortuitous encounters – both imaginary and real – nearly always combined the fantastical with the mundane. People were in these stories finding true love almost by accident, but they were finding it in the everyday, quotidian locations of the train station, the streetcar, and the street. Whether it was the pair that met at the post office

[74] Ibid.

because "he" thought "she" had left her umbrella at the mail window and tried to return it to her or the man and woman whose connection sparked while they were both at the cemetery burying loved ones, these types of encounters seemed possible – indeed, *were* possible – because they fit into the everyday rhythms of nearly all Berliners.[75]

And yet, as easy as it is to get caught up in the romance of such stories, we must not delude ourselves by thinking that these stories of success were representative or even particularly common. Far more often, the fortuitous encounter never take place or simply failed to work out. In the case of the couple that met in a cemetery because both were burying their fiancés at the same time, the relationship ultimately failed when the woman started seeing someone else and the man turned violent. There was also the feuilletonistic sketch of a man who sees a woman each day on his way into work and begins, gradually, to share with her longer and longer periods of eye contact as they pass until, one day, she is suddenly gone and never to be seen again. In these and countless other cases, fate rarely lived up to the hopes Berliners had placed in it.[76] This was the cool reality one found when he awoke from the fantasy of the fortuitous encounter. One journalist referred in a discussion of the unspoken language of love to the power of such a lingering glance on the street between a man and a woman but quickly end the fictional intimacy of his protagonists with a bitter ending: a day after their visual flirtation, "he" sees "her" walking with another man, and she does not so much as look his way.[77] Another story featured the fortuitous encounter of former lovers in Berlin's central park, the *Tiergarten*. Long ago, the man had broken off their engagement because his financial situation required that he think of himself

[75] Aimée Gaber, "Sehnsucht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23 October 1910, Nr. 291; "Eine Bekanntschaft auf dem Kirchhofe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 May 1910, Nr. 221.

[76] Th. Ebner, "Von der Strasse. Momentbilder," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 March 1904, Nr. 57.

[77] Aribert, "Die Liebessprache," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 August 1905, Nr. 191.

and put off any marriage that did not bring with it an immediate windfall (through a dowry, for example). Having since established himself, he is now ready to marry her, he says, and he has in fact been looking for her for years. "Fate ultimately helped me find you again," he tells her as he pleads for her to renew their engagement. But it is too late: she has already remarried and tells him coolly that, in any case, his love had not been true.[78]

Perhaps most interesting is Lenelotte Winfeld's short story, "Begegnung" ("Encounter"), which imagined the (doubly-)fortuitous encounter of a man and a woman who had long been carrying on a very intimate relationship via letters without having ever met. She rides a train into Berlin but is sad because only loneliness awaits her. She has namely just ended things with her pen pal because she detected in his last letter an impatient desire to see her, and she feared that a meeting would ruin the beautiful relationship they had cultivated free from the pressures of real names and faces. "Would not every intentional, banal encounter throw disruptive shadows over the thought exchange that connected them so purely and deeply?" A man suddenly gets on the train, and she sees in his face something warm and welcoming; in fact, it makes her forget her loneliness. This, she thinks to herself, is how she imagined her pen pal might look. The man is drawn to her, as well, and he promptly sits next to her and asks if he might share with her – the first person he has met in the big city – the reason for his trip into Berlin. "I'm looking for a woman I love without having ever seen. I don't know her name; I have no picture of her. But I can imagine her such that I am sure I can pick her out, even among hundreds." "But you must have met the woman somehow," she reasons. "We're pen pals," he says simply. "One of my novels, 'Nirvana,' caused us to start a correspondence. But my partner broke things off when she detected my desire for us to meet." At this point, the woman of course recognizes her erstwhile

[78] Reinhold Ortmann, "Wiedersehen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 September 1904, Nr. 209.

pen pal in this stranger, but she does not let on that she is wise to this fact and instead asks, "And so you think that you can find this woman in the metropolis without so much as a clue as to how she looks?" He replies, characteristically, "I trust benevolent fate that it will put her in my path," and then, suddenly, realizes that this has already happened. "Have I not already found her? I don't know what it is, but it seems to me that we've known each other for years." The woman still does not let on, saying only that her advice for him and his search is to stop looking for her since the woman clearly does not want to continue the relationship. "Much the contrary," he replies, "I sense that she longs for me, too; only the banality of the rigmarole that comes with an arranged meeting has scared her tender nature away. But how wonderful will our finding be," he continues, "when we, carried to each other by infallible intuition, stand in front of one another amidst the throngs of people. 'It's you' -- ! – We'll know it intuitively at first sight." But the woman remains firm, saying coldly, "Stop looking for the author of the letters. You'll never find her." After realizing fully that the woman in the train and the woman behind the letters are one and the same – "It's you!" – and accepting that she does not wish to meet, he tries to salvage their correspondence. "Let us be good friends…continue our letters." "You know that's not possible," she says while walking into the crowds of Berlin's bustling train station. "We'd never find the old tone again. Our meeting has destroyed the magic that so held your fantasy."[79]

Of course, the remarkable thing about this short story is that their meeting *had* been entirely fortuitous, and both are no doubt excited and titillated by the prospect of a chance meeting. Indeed, they express a certain boredom with "banal," arranged meetings, having twice found success in the chance encounter (once through letters and again on the train). But their relationship could never exist outside of the realm of fantasy, for it clashed with established

[79] Lenelotte Winfeld, "Begegnung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 November 1910, Nr. 305.

patterns of middle-class intimacy, and as soon as the man (who was clearly willing to risk breaking with them) attempted to fuse fantasy and reality, the woman's adherence to the rules of *Bürgerlichkeit* kicked in and ended things. "Encounter" reads, in fact, like a more depressing version of the 1998 Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan romantic comedy, *You've Got Mail*, where the protagonists, who have only met in an internet chat room, meet fortuitously in real life without realizing they are already intimately acquainted. The cold reality that should prevent their union – as fierce competitors in the bookselling world – is present here, as well, though, in this case, there is a happy ending because both are willing to overlook this fact. In one scene particularly reminiscent of the turn-of-the-century faith in fate, we see the protagonists going about their daily routines (walking to work, getting coffee, buying groceries) and passing right by each other, completely oblivious to their shared proximity. Indeed, the tagline of the movie reads, "Someone you pass on the street may already be the love of your life."[80] In both "Encounter" and *You've Got Mail*, we see thus a tremendous amount of confidence in the power of fate, of destiny, and yet the romantic strangers of each story, though led fortuitously together, struggle to recognize or accept when fate has, in a conveniently romantic and dramatic way, lived up to its billing.

Physicians noticed that Berliners were mildly obsessed with fortuitous encounters or "love at last sight," as Benjamin put it, at the time, as well. In his 1907 book on the psychology of love, Dr. Georg Lomer suggested that while young people were especially predisposed to believe in love at first sight, neither age nor life experience could protect people from being struck by lightning, as he put it. This kind of love, he continued, appeared to come out of thin air,

[80] *You've Got Mail*, DVD, directed by Nora Ephron (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2001).

when really it was the product of the fortuitous combination of various circumstances.[81] On the other hand, Berliners hardly needed a doctor to tell them about their "psychosis," as it were; they had, in fact, already diagnosed themselves and were debating the prudence, propriety, and safety of letting oneself believe in the possibility of love at first sight (and, more importantly, acting upon this belief by approaching or allowing oneself to be approached by a stranger). In a 1904 reader forum of the *Berliner Morgenpost*, men and women responded with a unanimous "yes" to the question of whether it was proper for a man to approach a woman on the street. In one response, a woman argued in poetic verse her point that "To profit you must risk / Without fear and without hesitation / I'd ridicule the world!" But the editors of the *Berliner Morgenpost* were less convinced, and they called on Berliners to consider the matter more carefully.[82] Not surprisingly, the paper was filled the following week with the responses of older, more conservative readers who still considered such a street acquaintance unthinkable. "We knew that people have not lost their moral compass," the editors concluded.[83] The advice column of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* provided similar counsel to a mother asking if it was a good idea for her daughter to show up at a café for a rendezvous with a man she had met on the commuter train. "Even if a rendezvous in a café is not a capital crime, it does display a certain amount of trust – trust that is questionable after such a fleeting acquaintance," the columnist wrote.[84]

The debate about the propriety of street-level intimacy is indicative of the way Berliners felt about love and dating in the big city, more generally. Their initial response to the question of

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[81] Georg Lomer, *Liebe und Psychose* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1907), 12-13.; Pascal, "Ein Buch über die Liebe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 15 June 1907, Nr. 299.

[82] "Das Publikum: Das Ansprechen auf der Strasse," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 May 1904, Nr. 102.

[83] "Das Publikum: Das Ansprechen auf der Strasse," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 May 1904, Nr. 111.

[84] "Briefkasten: Konditorei," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 May 1904, Nr. 215.

whether it was appropriate for young, single people to meet others in such an unsupervised, random way was poetic and enthusiastic, quite like so many journalists and authors portrayed the resulting relationships of such encounters through rose-colored glasses. And, to be sure, some Berliners truly believed this (and acted accordingly). The sheer number of swindlers who seized upon gullible and starry-eyed single men and women on the street and in the streetcar – and there are indeed far too many cases to even begin to list them here – stand as evidence of this fact.[85] Yet cooler heads ultimately prevailed and quickly centered the moral compass of the newspaper-reading public, just as Berliners generally continued to eschew the pursuit of romance that veered from the traditional path – however rutty and marked with potholes – of the nineteenth century.

Why did men and women find the idea of the fortuitous encounter so alluring? Why did they so enjoy thematizing and hoping for love that would appear out of thin air or strike one as a lightning bolt while walking down the street? To be sure, it was partly because such stories of chance and of unlikely romance were simply compelling and juicy (as they are to this day, if the popularity of *You've Got Mail* is any indication), and Berliners fell in love with the idea of falling in love on the street and in the streetcar because, on one level, it fit with and even enhanced their pride in Berlin as a modern metropolis that was incredibly big and disorientatingly fluid. Just as they reported on the chaos of moving day, of the uncountable crowds moving across Potsdamer Platz each hour, and of the troubles of provincials as they got lost and swindled in the cities, so also did they seize on the theme of chance meetings and the

[85] In fact, I stopped counting after finding well over 100 cases of swindlers who had played on Berliners' eagerness to end their loneliness. Each story was more or less the same with just the names and places differing from case or case. Some were quite bizarre, though; for example, the case where a man posing as a doctor found various "patients" in the hospital who believed love had found them. "Eine Bekanntschaft von der Strasse," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 January 1903, Nr. 4.

(im)possibility of finding love on the street because it fed the larger narrative of the *Großstadt*. It was also in some ways a coping mechanism not unlike the blasé attitude that affected, as Simmel claimed, all urban dwellers. Berliners enjoyed reading and fantasizing about fortuitous encounters because the difficulty of finding a mate frankly drove them to believe it or at least consider it as good a possibility as any. After all, the woman who rued having perhaps missed her "life's happiness" because she had not entertained the timid advances of a fellow streetcar passenger did so as a woman who wanted to find a mate and wanted to get married but had failed. And she was but one of thousands who had failed to make connections in the city.

On a different level, however, we might interpret Berliners' obsession with fate and the fortuitous encounter as a sort of release valve of some of the tensions of the modern world. The chance meeting that could not be was more than simply a modern aesthetic, more than the compelling narrative of city life as fleeting and contingent, and more than a last resort at love. As is clear from the debates and discussions on the topic, Berliners fantasized about actually making the fortuitous encounter a reality, and in this we start to see some of the tensions of the middle-class sensibility in the modern city. There were a few people who used the stories – real and imaginary – of random, fated connections as blueprints for their own lives, and these were men and women who had lost faith in the religion of middle-class*ness* (to borrow from Hettling and Hoffmann) and were willing to forgo the stability of the middle-class existence for a degree of love and intimacy. Many, many more, however, were like Felicitas's companion, for whom the fortuitous encounter, as comfortable as it was, could never provide the stability that was so central to middle-class identity.

Modern Obstacles to Connection

Berliners' fascination with fortuitous encounters fits with the city's larger narrative of failure when it came to finding love. The modern big city featured in nearly every account of a man or a woman's failure to find love, and of these there were many. To some extent, of course, this was more narrative than it was reality. Indeed, we know that Berliners were getting married (if not finding love) as much as or more than ever before, and on rare occasions the newspaper suggested as much.[86] In fact, marriage rates over the period of Berlin's rapid growth did not really sink all that much. Between 1890 and 1910, marriages held rather steady with approximately 20,000 couples marrying each year (though, given the rapid population growth, the percentage – roughly 2% of the total population 1890 – was actually decreasing slightly). It is, of course, impossible to parse out the number of these couples who married for love, though we know that a large number of working-class men and women married as a means of surviving unemployment during labor off-seasons or to avoid signing another apartment lease with no foreseeable income.[87] After all, marriages in just April and October – the renewal months for six-month leases – made up nearly half of all marriages in any given year, suggesting that Berliners either had good timing when it came to falling in love or, more likely, valued cheaper rent over

[86] For example, "In die Berliner Eheverhältnisse," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 31 December 1898, Nr. 87. "Berliner Eheschliessungen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 January 1901, Nr. 10.

[87] One journalist did announce in the *Berliner Morgenpost* that he had calculated a so-called "statistic of love" by studying the city hall marriage registers, which apparently recorded whether marrying couples affirmed their desire to marry verbally ("yes") or merely signed the form in silence. "Die Statistik der Liebe: Die Myrte blüht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 January 1904, Nr. 9.

emotional bonds.[88] Either way, at any given time, a good three-quarters of men and six in ten women in Berlin of marriage age were, in fact, married.[89]

On the other hand, and even if these numbers seem high compared to marriage rates today, it would be easy to see the figure "75% of men over 20 were married" and forget the 25% – over a quarter of a million men – and the nearly half-million women who were not married. Berliners around 1900 certainly did not look past these approximately 750,000 single city people. In fact, while newspapers occasionally celebrated the number of weddings in April or October, they much more frequently noted the thousands of men and women who had been unsuccessful.[90]

Statistical yearbooks and newspaper reports on marriages per month do not tell us why these 750,000 people had not found marriage; for that we have to look to the reader letters, to novels, and to diaries. And what we see there is nearly always the same: single Berliners complained that it was, indeed, difficult to meet others – in short, to find love and companionship – in the modern city. An 1888 study by Dora Duncker described a man who "had as good as no acquaintances" in Berlin and for whom "his loneliness […] grew to a nearly unbearable burden in the vivid, breathless ado of the big city."[91] Dorothee Goebeler, a journalist who penned countless insightful articles about the plight of women in the big city, wrote in 1912 that "women of times passed" had families to which they belonged; and while family ties do not

[88] On the matter of marrying for the purposes of an apartment lease, see "Die Ehe gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 May 1901, Nr. 102; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Berlin* (Berlin: P. Stankiewicz' Buchdruckerei, 1908-1911), 85.

[89] *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Berlin* (Berlin: P. Stankiewicz' Buchdruckerei, 1905), 17; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Berlin* (Berlin: P. Stankiewicz' Buchdruckerei, 1908-1911), 85.

[90] K—tsch, "Die Neigung zum Heirathen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 May 1901, Nr. 202.

[91] Dora Duncker, *Reelles Heiratsgesuch etc.: Inserat Studien* (Stuttgart: Carl Krabbe, 1888), 2.

necessarily mean friendship or a union of souls, "they give something to hold on to, and women of today, women of the big city often don't even have that." A man has his pub buddies and gets along well enough with that, she continued, but there is no analogous sphere of interaction for women. "Women thus stand alone when they enter the years in which they yearn for contact and connection."[92] Indeed, single women, widows, and newly-arrived provincials had the hardest time, as Goebeler noted, and most newcomers were, indeed, both single and young (under 30).[93] Thea Schmiets, a widow who had been married to a high-level civil servant until he eventually succumbed to a terminal illness, complained in a letter that she had no real opportunity to meet any men.[94] In this, she was one of the thousands of women who, as Goebeler pointed out, found themselves isolated in the city. Another "lonely woman" put it similarly in a reader letter to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*: "A woman without a family stands completely alone with her heart, her thoughts, and her feelings."[95] We have already referred to the fact that Berliners changed apartments with extreme frequency, and this, too, presented an obstacle to urban connections. With so many provincials moving to the metropolis, one reader letter to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* put it, "people have become increasingly estranged from one another. One changes his apartment like he changes clothes, such that getting to know others in the neighborhood is not remotely possible."[96]

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[92] Dorothee Goebeler, "Einsame Frauen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 December 1912, Nr. 651.

[93] Ibid; Lenger, "Grossstadtmenschen," 270.

[94] Letter to Adolf Mertens, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, "Mord; darin Zeitungsausschnitte, Briefe, Abschriften von Annoncen," Bl. 39.

[95] "Öffentliche Meinung: Drei Bräute und ein Mann," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 November 1904, Nr. 535.

[96] "Öffentliche Meinung: Gnädige Frau?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 August 1900, Nr. 374.

A lack of family in Berlin (for provincials and single women) and the absence of a circle of friends (for widows and single men and women alike) were certainly two major obstacles to making intimate connections in the city – and this, of course, on top of the fact that many newcomers to Berlin had left behind relationships in the provinces.[97] Another hurdle frequently cited – especially by men – was the problem of time and opportunity.[98] One man complained in a reader letter to the newspaper that finding a mate was a frustrating endeavor. The main problem, he wrote, is that a man's career "leaves him only Sundays and a small amount of time and opportunity on the weekdays to figure out what his wishes and desires are, much less find entrance into the circles in which he might hope to find this object of his yearning."[99] The experience of "A. G.," a 27-year-old assistant manager in the government bureaucracy, offers further evidence of this fact. A. G. wrote into the *Berliner Morgenpost* and posed to his fellow readers the ostensibly simply question, "How does one find a woman?" "I've lived in Berlin for several years now and know the city well enough," he began, "but while I have plenty of sophistication (*Bildung*) to be able to mix in good, middle-class circles, my wish to find a nice looking, thrifty girl has failed thus far…even in giant Berlin." A. G. pointed out that he could not simply approach a woman on the street or "out of the blue" because she would be skeptical of his intentions (as much has he surely fantasized about such an encounter). Berlin is much different from the provinces, he concluded, where everyone knows everyone else and you can just

[97] For diaries revealing the heartache of this parting, see, for example, Else Behrens, *Tagebuch 1898-1903*, Deutsches Tagebucharchiv Signatur 1314 / I.1 – 1314 / I.2; also Fritz Reinert, *Tagebuch*, Deutsches Tagebucharchiv Signatur 1929.

[98] "Öffentliche Meinung: Warum Junggeselle bleiben," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 December 1907, Nr. 659.

[99] "Der Weg zur Ehe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 August 1911, Nr. 214.

approach any woman. "My sense is that in Berlin, it's only possible through relatives and acquaintances."[100]

A. G.'s reader letter occasioned a burst of responses in the following weeks, and, contrary to the expectations of the editors ("Surely it cannot be so hard to find a fitting mate"), most of A. G.'s fellow readers agreed with him and shared stories of their own heartache.[101] "Mr. A. G. is absolutely right," a similarly exasperated postal assistant wrote. "For two years now I have looked for 'the right one,' but it has all been in vain."[102] And lest we forget about Berliners' faith in fortuitous encounters, "H. S." from suburban Steglitz counseled A. G. by saying "I would just wait until I happen upon a girl that pleases me *at first sight*, whether it's in the theater, at a concert, on the street, or any other place."[103]

As we will see in Chapter Three ("The Problem of Marriage"), the problems were also financial, for while disposable income meant that even working-class men and women could frequent dance halls and bars on Saturday night and Sunday afternoon, the reality of "the struggle for existence" was that one frequently had little left over after paying for rent.[104] Frieda Kliem's sewing work, for example, brought in a paltry 20-25 Marks per month, and she received another 22-23 M each month as interest on her inheritance. 31 M of this went to rent each month, leaving her approximately 16 M to spend on food, transportation, and clothing each month.[105]

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[100] "Das Publikum: Wie kommt man zu einer Frau?" *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 November 1911, Nr. 312.

[101] Ibid.

[102] "Das Publikum: Wie kommt man zu einer Frau?" *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 December 1911, Nr. 332.

[103] Emphasis added. Ibid.

[104] Jens Flemming, "'…von Jahr zu Jahr ein Sorgen und Bangen ohne Ende': Einkommen, Lohn, Lebensstandard," in Wolfgang Ruppert (ed.), *Die Arbeiter: Lebensformen, Alltag und Kultur von der Frühindustrialisierung bis zum 'Wirtschaftswunder'* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), 139.

[105] Statement by Marie Schönemann, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 10.

Leisure was thus mostly out of the question, and it is hardly surprising that Frieda complained often about her financial problems to whomever would listen. But Frieda was hardly the worst off. Berlin's "deep pockets of poverty," as Peter Fritzsche has put it, have been well documented and scarcely need recounting here.[106] One story – unearthed by Fritzsche – provides the most easily understood picture of the economic plight of single women who were new to Berlin and trying to make ends meet. On August 9, 1905, the *Berliner Morgenpost* reported the suicide of Else Buchholz, a "twenty-two-year-old woman [… who] had only recently arrived in Berlin to work as a buffet lady, but after only finding employment as a waitress and then losing her job, her apartment, and finally her money, grew tired of life."[107] Stories like that of Else Buchholz were, sadly, so common that they became almost a fixture in the daily scenery of Berlin. Women without money – like Else Buchholz – had a hard time making connections with other Berliners because they simply could not afford the extravagance of a café or the tram fare out to the suburbs to go dancing.[108] The *Berliner Morgenpost*, which in 1898 ran a series about "Women in the Struggle for Existence" aimed at giving tips for women trying to make it on their own, argued in its series introduction that advice for single Berliners was especially relevant because so many women (and men) lack the job stability and wages even to think about getting married.[109] Indeed, one of the articles in the series suggested wryly that the best way to find a husband was to have "lots of money."[110]

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[106] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 120.

[107] "Verzweiflung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 August 1905, Nr. 185, quoted in Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 121.

[108] Carola Lipp, "Sexualität und Heirat," in Wolfgang Ruppert (ed.), *Die Arbeiter: Lebensformen, Alltag und Kultur von der Frühindustrialisierung bis zum 'Wirtschaftswunder'* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), 191-192.

[109] "Die Frau im Kampf ums Dasein: Zur Einführung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 11 December 1898, Nr. 71.

[110] "Die Frau im Krampf ums Dasein," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 February 1899, Nr. 38.

Financial problems made it difficult to start a relationship, but even those Berliners who succeeded in making connections often found their intimacy cut short because of a lack of money.[111] For one, as Carola Lipp has noted, a major obstacle to the (at least physical) nurturing of a relationship was dearth of opportunities to be alone for men and women who could not afford an apartment or even a room of their own (as few working-class Berliners could). Keeping quiet and keeping secret were thus barriers well known to the city's proletariat.[112] The daily newspapers, moreover, were filled with stories where money had been the root cause of a suicide, violence perpetrated against a lover, a broken engagement, or, more commonly, some combination of all three. There was the case, for example, of a 29-year-old bookkeeper who had fallen in love with a salesclerk at a soap store and even bought soap each day so he could see her. They soon got engaged, but when the salesclerk realized that her betrothed earned very little and was wasteful with what he had, she broke off the engagement, only to find herself the victim of an attempted murder by the spurned lover.[113] The *Berliner Morgenpost* even thematized this as a standard street scene and printed a story about former lovers who meet eyes while passing on the street. The man's eyes are full of sadness, for she had married someone else when it was clear that he had no money, and out of a sense of hopelessness he jumps into the river to commit suicide.[114] The stories did not always end in sadness – in 1909, for example, a 72-year-old man finally took his 82-year-old bride to the town hall to be married after waiting more than forty

[111] Carola Lipp points out, for example, that sex often served as a substitute to marriage because working-class men and women simply could not afford to get married. Lipp, "Sexualität und Heirat," 193.

[112] Lipp, "Sexualität und Heirat," 192.

[113] "Das Liebesdrama in der Weinhandlung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 February 1908, Nr. 85.

[114] Th. Ebner, "Von der Strasse: Momentbilder," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 March 1904, Nr. 57.

years to establish themselves financially – but exceptions like this only put the many tragic relationships into starker relief.[115]

Life was especially hard for working-class Berliners who faced several of these problems at once (and most did). After all, Berlin was growing due primarily to the influx of provincials seeking work, and when they arrived in Berlin, they had neither support networks (such as family and friends) nor work. The author of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*'s weekly column, the "Berliner Observer," called them "luck-seekers" and noted that they filled the Berlin metropolis by the thousand. They are "people who have lost everything back home or have won nothing at all and thus leave their quiet provincial nooks and flock to the gleaming, enticing imperial capital in the sure hope of finding here what they have searched for in vain." They come, he continued, to rebuild their lives in Berlin in a better way. But all too quickly – when disappointment comes and their "castles on the cloud crumble" – they realize that it was a "deceptive luster" that led them here. They ultimately hit bottom "even faster and more helplessly, for here relationships were foreign to them; here they lived lonely and isolated in unknown surroundings, overcome by the foreignness to the point of diffident, timid vacillation and fear."[116] The "Berlin Observer" paints a grim picture of the fortune of these thousands upon thousands of "luck-seekers," but the reality was, indeed, miserable, especially when one considers the fact that, unlike Paris or Chicago at the time, Berlin neighborhoods did not break down by ethnic group. As such, provincials lacked even the basic comfort of a shared cultural background with the men and women who lived next to them. When provincials landed in Berlin, they were, for the most part, completely alone.

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[115] "Sonderbare Brautpaare (Aus dem Tagebuch eines Standesbeamten)," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 May 1909, Nr. 105.

[116] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 May 1905, Nr. 230.

Alongside financial problems, what worked against all single men and women in Berlin – whether working- or middle-class, newly-arrived or life-long Berliners – was a set of long-standing mores and expectations for comportment that limited the ways in which they could interact in the city. Money was certainly part of the problem, but it was more than this. Frieda Kliem in many ways provides the perfect example. After all, she had her standards and refused the matchmaking attempt of her friends because she only wanted to marry a civil servant. This probably had more to do with his social standing than his income. Indeed, as often as financial trouble ended so many working-class connections before they started (or soon after), so also did middle-class men and women frequently fail to unite because of what ultimately came down to class differences. One man wrote into the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* asking for advice because he feared he was doomed to become a life-long bachelor. Despite having made some money on his own, he had come from a poor family and now feared that any middle-class woman (or her family) would object to his humble beginnings. My sisters, he pointed out, are all servants, "not even salesgirls."[117] The "Berlin Observer" tried to counsel his single male readers to counteract the problems of the modern world by searching for women in poorer areas, places where they did not normally look, places where women were not doing so well.[118]

The phrase, "the modern world," and others like it ("nowadays," "back then," etc.), were fixtures in the emerging lexicon of dissatisfaction and frustration metropolitan men and women felt about love – and the hegemonic normativities governing it – in the big city. "Back when grandfather took grandmother" was how laments about a golden, easier, and in any case bygone time often began, and it was clear to Berliners from factory floors to Tiergarten penthouses that

[117] "Öffentliche Meinung: Wer weiß Rat?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 April 1906, Nr. 180.

[118] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 November 1902, Nr. 515.

the modern world and the modern city had made things more difficult when it came to finding love.[119] Back then, as one writer remembered, "a young man, when he reached the marrying age, chose one of the waiting girls that pleased him, took her in if she said 'yes,' and made her his wife in front of the pastor and then the city hall." It was similarly easy for women: "When a young girl reached marrying age, she went to a dance, where suitors appeared; she turned away the ones she didn't like and said 'yes' if there was one she did want, and she soon afterwards became his wife, had children, and lived happily and without any further desires until she died." But by the turn of the century, these times had passed. "That beautiful time […] is unfortunately irrecoverably lost. It's too bad, since it was a wonderful and happy time."[120] Whether it was the modern need to learn the current dance à la mode ("back then," one man complained, one learned a set of dances that lasted him his whole life), redecorate the connubial apartment with each changing mood ("in the good old days," another wrote, an apartment had a single décor that never changed), or the replacement of the "intimate sphere" of the coffee house or confectionary shop by the American-style bar that made life more expensive and less relaxed (in "old Berlin," a third man recalled, cafés and *Konditoreien* were social gathering places), Berliners invoked the beauty of yesteryear in the same breath as they had gushed about the metropolis's fluidity, tempo, and size.[121] To be sure, each generation to some extent deplores the arrival of the "new" and the passing of the "old," but old and new were pitted against each other at the turn of the century with astonishing force. The "modern women's journal" – an exciting new offering by the

[119] Paul Kirstein, "Verlobungen. Auch eine Osterplauderei," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 March 1902, Nr. 75.

[120] Wilhelm Brönner, "Der Kampf um die neue Liebe," *Geschlecht und Gesellschaft* 1, no. 1 (1906): 7-14.

[121] Fritz Wernicke, "Allerlei Tänze," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 December 1908, Nr. 288; K. E., "Tango-Typen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 November 1913, Nr. 328; Rudolf Lothar, "Die modern Wohnung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 May 1909, Nr. 304; C. A., "Konditorei – Café – Bar. Ein Stück Berliner Entwickelung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 December 1905, Nr. 284.

Berliner Morgenpost to begin the new year (1910) – provides a fitting structure for us to view this antagonism, for here modern women could find practical tips for sewing, fashion, and homemaking, each section displaying first "the old method" and then "the new method."[122] But "the old methods" were inadequate in more important matters than creating a paper cutout pattern for a new dress; when it came to meeting "the right one," as one woman claimed, "the old methods" were "broken."[123]

Most commonly, the problem with old methods in the new world was that they represented an outdated way of thinking about propriety between the sexes. Partly this was the problem of encountering others, of finding connections in a big city where anonymity and strangers cast a shadow upon meaningful intimacy. The idea of meeting on the street was appealing, as we have seen, and many frustrated men, for example, saw this frankly as their only real opportunity to come into contact with a mate due to the pressures of their jobs.[124] And yet, in most circles, a well-intentioned, intimate approach made on the street remained taboo. This was no doubt to some extent because of the prevalence of swindlers and prostitutes, both of whom filled the courts and newspapers with incidents of unwanted advances by strangers. Swindlers and prostitutes were, of course, not new with the birth of the big city, but, as so many observers noted at the time, the material pressures of metropolitan life – combined with the large pool of potential victims and clients – paved a road to perdition that proved too enticing for criminals and down-on-their-luck Berliners to resist. One thus did well to regard any fortuitous encounters

[122] "Ein modernes Frauenblatt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 January 1910, Nr. 1.

[123] E. M., "Wie man Männer fesselt: Möglichkeiten der Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10 December 1911, Nr. 339.

[124] "Das Publikum: Das Ansprechen auf der Strasse," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 24 April 1904, Nr. 96.

with a healthy dose of skepticism.[125] But it was more than just the swindlers and prostitutes that had discredited street acquaintances. After all, street encounters between honest, well-intentioned people were disdained even after it was clear that neither was working a trick.

Those who avoided street acquaintances still faced the material pressures of the metropolis, and these were the very men and women who lacked the money and rank to mix in circles where the old, proper methods were adequate. They found themselves on the outside looking in when it came to choosing a marriage partner. Even middle-class Berliners were locked in the struggle for existence more than ever before, and aside from the danger of being swindled, they, too, found that tighter budgets had changed the calculus involved in pursuing intimacy. The traditional expenses for dance lessons, for example – dance lessons that so often led to a first love and often to a marriage – were extravagant luxuries that did not fit in the modern world of rising costs.[126] In this sense, cold calculation dethroned love and mutual interest as it had existed to some extent in grandfather and grandmother's time. One writer even went so far as to suggest that the modern world had "made the goddess of love into the goddess of reason."[127] And while many continued to see love and affection as the best guarantee for the stability of a relationship, few argued that one could overlook the material realities of the modern, metropolitan world.[128] "We live in strangely uncertain times," Dorothee Goebeler wrote

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[125] Ibid.

[126] "Das Publikum: Tanzstundenluxus," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 18 October 1908, Nr. 246. On dance lessons so often leading to marriage, see, for example, "Wilh. V. Buttlar, "Aus der Ball-Saison," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 February 1908, Nr. 59; R. G., "Der letzte Tanzstundenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 February 1904, Nr. 50; Hans Ringlau, "Gelegenheiten zur Heirat," *Heirats-Zeitung* 30, no. 238 (1914), 1-2; L. Marco, "Tanzstunde," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 October 1904, Nr. 256; Paul Kirstein, *Verlobung!* (Berlin: Kühling & Güttner Theaterbuchhandlung, 1894).

[127] Rudolf Lothar, "Liebe von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 March 1908, Nr. 165.

[128] "Öffentliche Meinung: Die Liebe höret nicht auf," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 September 1912, Nr. 484.

in 1914. “Wealth shifts like sand; income is lost. What today appears to be sturdy lies tomorrow in pieces on the floor.”[129] Whereas “the question of the heart [was] until recent decades nearly the only basis for marriage,” as columnist J. Lorm wrote in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, “it is in our realistic time almost pure legend.” Now, he continued, one only “speculate[s] […] whether it is rational” to marry.[130] “Modern love is no longer the wild steed that jumps over gates,” another wrote more poetically. “[I]t is trained to step carefully and wears a bridle with reins.”[131]

These writers emphasized without fail the struggle for existence, the fight for one’s daily bread, as well as increasingly expensive ways of life and increasingly complicated needs of urban people. Indeed, as Lorm wrote in another piece, “it has become so unmodern” to use words like love, happiness, and peaceful home. “As if one still looked for these phantoms in our time!” The old methods, as he saw it, were far away from the modern, urban world – a world where life was rushed and people had no time to devote to things that did not promise fame or money.[132] Modern life had become a struggle – a battle, even – between the sexes.[133] And in a battle, one needed to use tactics. “One no longer writes long letters [or] pours out his feelings in another’s breast; one does not reveal himself,” wrote the social commentator, Rudolf Lothar. “Much the contrary,” he argued, “one closes himself off as well as he can.”[134] “There is no doubt,” he wrote in another article, “that we have been driven to skepticism by the struggle for

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[129] Dorothee Goebeler, “Versorgte Frauen,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 January 1914, Nr. 50.

[130] J. Lorm, “Ehefragen,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 August 1905, Nr. 395.

[131] Rudolf Lothar, “Liebe von heute,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 March 1908, Nr. 165.

[132] J. Lorm, “Frauen-Sehnsucht,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 October 1907, Nr. 521.

[133] Rudolf Lothar, “Das Geheimnis der Koketterie,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 January 1909, Nr. 15; S. Wities, “Zur Strategie der Ehe,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 December 1912, Nr. 651.

[134] Rudolf Lothar, “Freundschaft und Geselligkeit,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 31 December 1909, Nr. 834.

existence."[135] Indeed, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* ran in 1902 a story that looked nostalgically (and a little bit humorously) at the guides to writing love letters that had been so popular in the nineteenth century but could now only be found in old book stores and markets.[136] Long, flowery declarations of love were also not relevant anymore in the modern world; neither was sentimentality in German novels.[137] Gallantry was out of fashion.[138] Even engagement rings – which were once made to order with great care and attention – were now mass-produced. "A product of our time," Hans Ostwald remarked wistfully.[139] And whereas one in small towns still heard wedding bells ringing with an almost steady regularity, Berliners at the turn of the century would listen in vain for that singular announcement of a wedded pair. Wedding bells "are usually left out," the *Berliner Morgenpost* noted in 1907, "because in the turbulent, bustling metropolis one doesn't hear them anyway."[140]

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Wedding bells, professions of love, florid love letters – these are, of course, but tiny parts of the intimate world of the turn of the century metropolis. Taken together, though, they are indications of a shift, a rupture, a new era. This break with the past and the resulting new methods were Berliners' responses to a world that was now modern and urban. These two features were inextricably linked; they were both provenance and offspring of one another, and

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[135] Rudolf Lothar, Eine Liebesszene," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 December 1910, Nr. 617.

[136] Paul v. Schönthan, "Liebesbriefsteller," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 January 1902, Nr. 31.

[137] Oskar Klaußmann, "Liebeserklärung und Heiratsantrag," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 April 1908, Nr. 189; Rudolf Lothar, "Die Scheu vor dem Gefühl," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 June 1912, Nr. 319.

[138] Dorothee Goebeler, "Der ungalante Mann," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 October 1912, Nr. 536.

[139] Hans Ostwald, "Vom Trauring," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 December 1908, Nr. 305.

[140] "Wenn die Hochzeitsglocken lauten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 April 1907, Nr. 87.

whereas the metropolis became the very symbol of the modern world (and enhanced its modernity), it was itself only possible because of the material transformation of Europe in the nineteenth century. Together, the metropolis and the modern world created a profoundly new experience for men and women at the turn of the century – an experience that was shaped perhaps more than anything else by new (or certainly more difficult) material conditions and a social world made many times more challenging to intimacy because of the vast numbers of ever-moving strangers and an equally static set of mores. This new reality affected Berliners in myriad ways, but what brought pen to paper as often as anything else were the new intimate and interpersonal dynamics of the modern city. From first meeting to marriage, city people found that intimacy in the modern metropolis was difficult to find and just as hard to keep in their grasps. As this chapter has suggested, Berliners – whether born in the city or, more commonly, recently arrived from the provinces – expressed their frustration at being lonely, not having enough money to marry or to be a desirable mate, and at a lack of opportunities to meet other single people. They also displayed a fascination – one born out of this frustration – with fate and the fortuitous encounter, the idea, in other words, that where logic, effort, or longing had failed, sheer luck or chance (or Cupid himself)[141] might effect the happy mingling of total strangers. And yet Berliners were, for the most part, careful not to try to coerce fate or lend Cupid a hand (or a quiver), for to approach a stranger on the street or in the streetcar was to brush up against the boundaries of proper (middle-class) masculinity and femininity. For that matter, successful and lasting fortuitous encounters were mostly the topic of fiction, and while there was no shortage of short stories about Berliners meeting this way, norms of public comportment prevented them from becoming reality with any frequency. One newspaper story focused on a

[141] Siegbert Salter, "Aus dem Standesregister einer Millionstadt: 1. Der Berliner Heiratsmarkt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 March 1906, Nr. 51.

young man who met the eyes of a pretty girl late one evening while waiting for the streetcar. Shyness and propriety prevent him from addressing her, and this frustrates him as he climbs aboard. "But he comforts himself with the thought that he will see her again, that he will then … that, that – yes, that -- -- --, he grows upset."[142] Working-class Berliners appear to have been more willing to entertain the idea of the city encounter, but would-be swindlers caught on to this and found in thrifty, hard-working, lonesome, working-class Berliners their most gullible – though not particularly profitable – victims. In fact, the fear of being swindled left only the most desperate willing to flout the old methods and hegemonic masculinity and femininity, and the nevertheless high number of swindlers and victims suggests that many urban dwellers were, indeed, as lonely as the numerous short stories and reader letters suggest.

Moreover, while the swindlers did, indeed, get quite a bit of press (and even featured in several short stories),[143] the dominant narrative about love and intimacy in Berlin was that of the fortuitous encounter or love at last sight à la Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin. For turn-of-the-century Berliners, this fantasy was about more than the compelling story of strangers falling in love (though this was one aspect of it, and we see here a completely different narrative fixation than that of danger and suicide). Their interest in chance meetings was also more than just a last resort, an expression of their frustration with conventional methods that had failed them. It was, more importantly, an important imaginative space of adventure outside the bounds of traditional masculinity and femininity, even if it did not, except for in the example of a few working-class men and women, ever become more than a fantasy. Tracing Berliners' interest in fate and the fantastical mixed with the everyday adds another layer to the story of urbanization and modernity

[142] O. F., "Berlin nach Elf: Im letzten Stadtbahnzuge," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 18 March 1900, Nr. 65.

[143] For example, W. Scharrelmann, "Fräulein Mimi," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 November 1912, Nr. 328.

at the turn of the century, and it gives city people a degree of imaginative agency not afforded them in studies of the city as dangerous or alienating.

This chapter has ultimately cast the modern metropolis in an antagonistic role that, much like in Döblin's *Alexanderplatz*, worked against its protagonists by swirling, mixing, and disorienting them until they could not find their own personal, financial, and emotional stability, much less relationships and intimacy. And while we have seen Berliners respond by embracing a narrative of fate and imaginary encounters, this was by no means their only reaction. Frieda Kliem turned down the matchmaking attempt of her friends and seemed poised to perhaps go under in the way so many single women who had come to Berlin from the provinces did. But she was also a modern woman, and her life is emblematic of the tensions and contradictions of middle-class*ness* at the turn of the century. Indeed, when the traditional methods failed – as they ultimately did for nearly all of the protagonists in this chapter – she responded by using the conditions of modern urban life – the same ones that, in this chapter, so often worked against intimacy – to her advantage and, as we will see in the next chapter, succeeded in finding some measure of connection and love.

CHAPTER TWO: MODERN LOVE

Love on a Bicycle

In the late fall of 1900, the German Kaiser Wilhelm II made a rather curious comment to the group of young women selected to greet him at the dedication of a new monument to his great-grandmother, Queen Louise: "Do not ride bicycles!"[1] This was hardly first-rate eulogy material, to be sure, but the Kaiser's plea begins to make slightly more sense when we consider that Queen Louise was frequently cited (by men) as a model of womanhood and that riding this new-fangled vehicle called the bicycle was considered rather un-ladylike. In any case, on that autumn day in front of the memorial in Königsberg, Wilhelm II's command to women to abstain from bicycle riding came too late. Cycling had begun to take off already in 1890s, and women as well as men were quickly becoming cycling enthusiasts. The phenomenon of cycling, in fact, overwhelmed both Europe and the United States, with cities like Chicago boasting over 500 bicycle clubs at the turn of the century.[2] Berlin had its fair share, too, so much so that the *Berliner Morgenpost* even had a regular feature called "Where are we bicycling to tomorrow?," which suggested ideas for bicycle rides in and around the city.[3] Berliners donned cycling apparel that they could now buy ready-made, and city planners even accommodated the city's love for cycling by modernizing parts of the beloved central park, the *Tiergarten*, and turning

[1] F. R., "'Steigen Sie nicht aufs Rad!'" *Berliner Tageblatt*, 7 October 1900, Nr. 510.

[2] George D. Bushnell, "When Chicago was Wheel Crazy," *Chicago History* 4, no. 3 (Fall 1975), 172.

[3] "Wohin radeln wir morgen?" *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 June 1900, Nr. 138.

Figure 2.1: Berlin bicyclists enjoying a ride through the Grunewald forest, 1905.

(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin, F Rep 290 (01), Nr. O317909.)

some of its walking routes into bicycle paths.[4] By 1911, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* estimated that there were already over 100,000 bicycles in Berlin.[5]

Its popularity at the turn of the century notwithstanding, women who took to cycling were still largely regarded as daring, independent, and audacious, and not just because they had flouted their Kaiser's anti-cycling edict. Much more, there was something about cycling that struck older Europeans as unfeminine and unbecoming.[6] An article in the *Berliner Tageblatt* suggested that the problem was that a woman on a bicycle could not – as she had otherwise done

[4] Sylvester, "Die Berliner Parks: Der Thiergarten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 June 1899, Nr. 128.

[5] Victor Ottmann, "Berliner Radfahrerschmerzen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 26 July 1911, Nr. 375.

[6] For an excellent discussion of literary and social scientific debates about bicycling in turn-of-the-century America, see Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazines and Scorching Women," *American Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1995): 66-101. On the bicycle as a beacon and/or aesthetic feature of modernity, see Glen Norcliffe, *The Ride of Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Figure 2.2: Cover-page of *Maria the Bicyclist* in the "Intimate Stories" series, 1905.

(Source: Wilhelm v. Berg, *Die Radler-Marie*, vol. 71 of *Intime Geschichten* (Berlin: Berliner Roman-Verlag, 1905.)

"for centuries" – hide through clothing or artfulness the parts of her body that must be kept private.[7] Cycling costumes for women were, of course, more form-fitting than normal clothes, with some even involving trousers, and riding a bicycle required as much or more exertion than other middle-class leisure activities for young people (tennis, golf, ice-skating). One thinks, though, that the general aversion to women riding bicycles had more to do with the freedom and independence it granted women who might now ride off on their own without any supervision. Marie, the sheltered eighteen-year-old protagonist of a penny novel published 1905, wants badly to learn how to ride a bicycle but is rebuffed again and again by her aunt/guardian, who calls it a

[7] F. R., "'Steigen Sie nicht aufs Rad!'" *Berliner Tageblatt*, 7 October 1900, Nr. 510.

"corrupt idea." "Bicycling," the aunt explains, "looks like emancipation."[8] There was also the widow who wrote into the advice column of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* asking if she could ride her bicycle during her mourning period. The columnist responded that, in her case, bicycling was only acceptable as a way of getting to work and not, importantly, as a leisure activity.[9] It seems unlikely that so many women bought bicycles (or wanted to) simply because they were signs of emancipation, though that was no doubt part of their allure. More than anything, women took to bicycling because it was a unique thrill, a thoroughly modern take on horseback riding (indeed, eighteen-year-old Marie tries to appeal to her aunt's respect for traditional "riding" and the fact that "even the empress" rides).[10] A 1905 article in a popular women's magazine, for example, described the thrill of "fly[ing]" while riding a bicycle, noting that to ride is to "triumph over time and space." Bicycling, the magazine advised its mostly middle-class female readers, is also healthy because it "fights off neurasthenia."[11]

Indeed, bicycling had its benefits, the most important of which might – at least for young people – have been its use as a way for lovers to find a moment alone together or perhaps meet for the first time. A bicycle may at first seem a rather unsteady base for cultivating a love relationship (indeed, one writer suggested that the sport of bicycling was too "egotistical" and that "skinned knees, flat tires, and bent handlebars are not really congenial to amorous feelings"), but it proved – in both theory and practice – to be a reliable way of finding intimacy.[12] Berlin's

[8] Wilhelm v. Berg, *Die Radler-Marie*, vol. 72 of *Intime Geschichten* (Berlin: Berliner Roman-Verlag, 1905), 3.

[9] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 January 1904, Nr. 3.

[10] Ibid., 4.

[11] Dr. Fr. Ranzow, "Radelnde Damen," *Die Welt der Frau* 26 (1905), 411.

[12] A. von Wartenberg, "Amor in der Sommerfrische," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 August 1903, Nr. 364.

Figure 2.3: "The Inseparables," 1900.

(Source: "Wohin radeln wir morgen?" *Berliner Morgenpost* 16 June 1900, Nr. 138.)

daily newspapers, for example, published stories about a girl who had been "tempted away" on a bicycle and a violent love triangle that had started on a bicycling trip.[13] Marie, in the aforementioned penny novel, ultimately learns to ride in secret and risks her aunt's complete disavowal because she sees it as her only opportunity to meet a young man who has caught her eye. In this, the bicycle – and the distance it potentially placed between would-be couples and their chaperones – was more than just another leisure activity; for Marie, at least, it was her ability to "have a say," as she put it, in the person she would ultimately marry.[14] The *Berliner Morgenpost*'s series on tips for single women in the modern metropolis likewise recommended

[13] "Die Entführung auf dem Zweirade," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 November 1898, Nr. 42; "Zwei Liebestragödien," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 August 1905, Nr. 427.

[14] Berg, *Die Radler-Marie*, 30.

bicycling outings as the best way to meet men, especially if a woman made sure to teeter and crash in "his" direction so "he" could catch her. She should also make sure to "sprain" her ankle so that he might lead her to comfort under a tree, where "professions of love flourish the best."[15] And just as a young couple in the short story "Zu Rad" ("By Bicycle"*)* race away from their older and less experienced cyclist chaperone in order to find a moment for themselves, so also does Marie ultimately escape her aunt with her bicycling beau and receive in due course a profession of love.[16]

Other than the professional bicyclists who took part in the wildly popular six-day endurance races in the suburbs, our protagonist, Frieda Kliem, may have been Berlin's most passionate bicycle rider. Indeed, Frieda displayed an almost religious devotion to her bicycle rides. Any weekend that featured nice weather saw Frieda riding in the Grunewald forest (which she could reach by bicycle) or in the Falkenhagen forest, which required a short tram ride northwest of the city. Frieda's weekend bicycle rides likely began alone, but, true to the advice columns and magazine features that suggested bicycle riding as a way to meet people, she soon found others who shared her passion. In fact, Frieda's entire circle of friends was formed this way. She met not only her best friend, Antonie Köhler, on a bicycle ride, but also the Selkas – Anna and Hermann – and she grew so close to Anna that she took her in for a spell when Anna was considering a divorce from Hermann.[17] These friendships – Antonie's, especially – would

[15] "Die Frau im Krampf ums Dasein," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 February 1899, Nr. 38.

[16] Charles Foley, "Zu Rad: Novellette," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 December 1899, Nr. 304; Berg, *Die Radler-Marie*, 30ff.

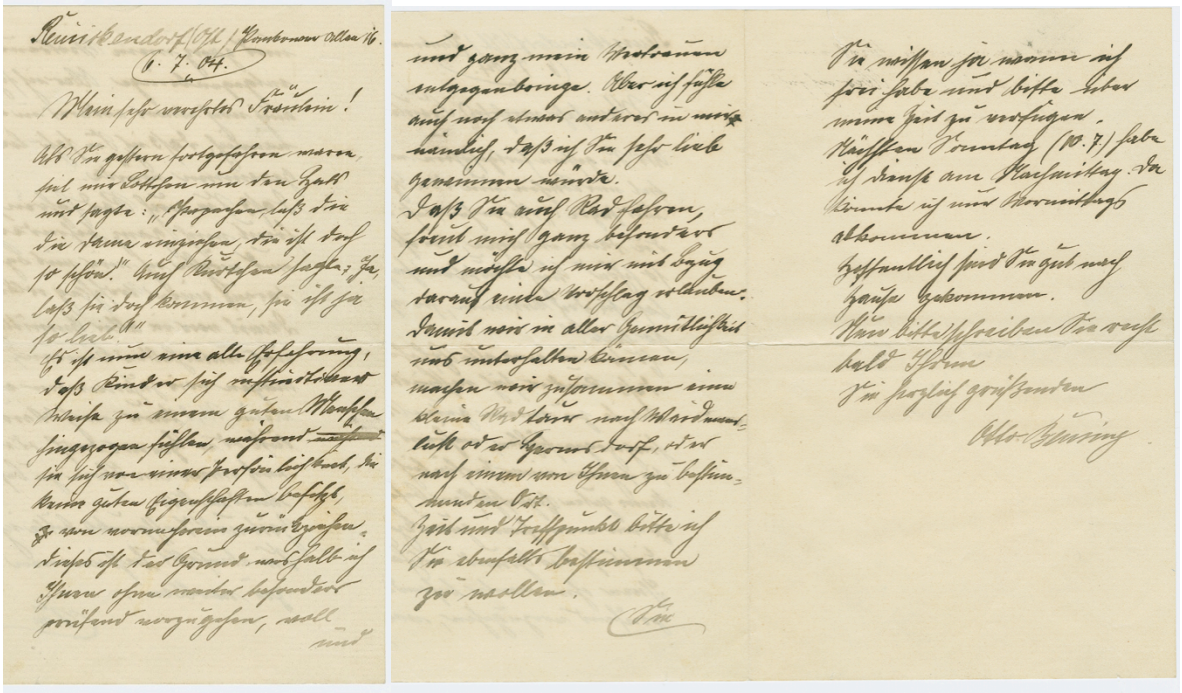
[17] Statement by Antonie Köhler, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 110-113; Statement by Anna Selka, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-9.

prove critical for Frieda and her attempt to feel at home in the big city, and, in each case, the bicycle was the vehicle for the relationship.

Frieda's bicycle outings also occasioned several male acquaintances, and, crucially, we see her finding for the first time real opportunities for lasting intimacy with men, whereas before she had looked in vain for a man who suited both her tastes and middle-class ambitions. Already in the summer of 1904, Frieda met a banker named Otto Buning, and the two bonded over their love of cycling. It is not clear whether they met for the first time while on a bicycle ride, but Otto's first love letter to Frieda in July 1904 in any case pointed to her love of cycling as a reason he had fallen for her. Cycling, moreover, was to be the way their relationship might continue to grow: "I'm especially happy that you also enjoy cycling," he wrote, "and so I would like to allow myself a proposal: so that we can talk comfortably, let us take a little bicycle ride to Waidmannslust or Hermsdorf or wherever you would like." Frieda had, in fact, already visited Otto at his home and met his four children, and while the immediate approval of the children convinced Otto of Frieda's character and compelled him to set aside caution, "give you my complete and utter trust," and state quite simply "that I am falling in love with you," Frieda was less sure she wanted to become a mother to four children so soon (as she told her friends and neighbors). There is no record of how much time Frieda spent with Otto after this letter or even if she accepted his invitation to a second bicycle date, but Otto did eventually propose marriage, and, for years after, Frieda counted Otto's first love letter among her most valuable possessions.[18]

[18] Letter from Otto Buning to Frieda Kliem, 6 July 1904, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95; Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 5-7, 11, 67-70.

Figure 2.4: Otto Buning's love letter to Frieda Kliem, found among her papers in 1914.



(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 95.)

What Otto did not know was that he had competition. After all, Robert Adam, a young stockbroker, joined the bicycling outings at around the same time that Frieda's boss, Hedwig Rohls, was murdered and Frieda was opening her own short-lived business. In 1906, when Frieda, Anna Selka, Antonie Köhler, and Robert Adam were relaxing in a restaurant in the suburb of Halensee after a bicycle outing, Robert recognized a friend from the stock exchange, Emil Freier, and called him over. Frieda and Emil soon fell into a deep conversation, and when she revealed that her store was not doing particularly well, he offered to help her find a new job. In this, Frieda proved yet again able to adapt to the changing demands of the modern metropolis, and she volunteered that she had once learned how to use a typewriter and could probably pick it up again fairly quickly. This would work perfectly, Emil told her, because his position at the stock exchange afforded him ample opportunities to line up various piece-work typing orders for Frieda. This conversation in Halensee marked the beginning of a close friendship between Frieda

and Emil, one that brought him to her apartment "nearly every day," as he remembered.[19] Emil came each day to deliver new orders and help her complete the existing ones, and while Emil's entire family – with whom Frieda became rather close – attested to the purity of their relationship ("her relationship with my brother," Emil's sister, Clara, reported, "was purely platonic"), Frieda clearly saw in Emil her ideal husband.[20] After all, they got along well and shared similar interests, Frieda knew and enjoyed his siblings (especially his sister, whom she later sent a note of encouragement when she was apparently enduring a rough situation),[21] and Emil, quite practically, made good money (around 140 Marks per month). Emil also helped her move and even stored furniture for her throughout the years. "My sense," Emil later told the police, "is that Kliem assumed I wanted to marry her. She even said as much to other people, notably to my family."[22] From his perspective, though, the two were simply good friends.

In addition to her relationships with Otto and Emil, Frieda's existence was brightened further by a third male acquaintance she made while on a bicycle ride. This relationship was different than the others, though; while the modern leisure activity of the bicycle outing had led to her potential marriage with Otto Buning and her desired pairing with Emil Freier, these relationships were still more or less traditional in nature. Her third relationship – that with Otto Mewes – was both fundamentally different and, it turns out, thoroughly modern. Frieda appears to have met Mewes (the only name of his most people remembered) on a bicycle ride, and he became a fixture of every outing thereafter. Mewes was a three-times-divorced, eccentric, and

[19] Statement by Emil Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 63-66.

[20] Statement by Clara Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 67-70.

[21] New Year's card from Frieda Kliem to Clara Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[22] Statement by Emil Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 63-66.

rather finicky man of leisure who hailed from the nearby town of Brandenburg an der Havel and yet seemed to live everywhere and nowhere. Mewes is perhaps best described in the words of his friend, Paul Schambach: "He lives as a vegetarian and has a certain weakness for the fairer sex that has frankly cost him more than once. Even though he has been married and divorced three times, he apparently, in spite of his 65 years, is not completely healed." Mewes came from a comfortable bourgeois family and was apparently a born businessman, leaving the house as he did at fifteen and taking a managerial job at a factory before he met two older French women and lived off of their largesse (in return for language and voice lessons). Mewes also became a Freemason, which somehow seems to fit his freethinking, freewheeling persona.[23]

Whereas Frieda's friendships and courtships with Otto and Emil appear to have been wholly respectable and in line with traditional attitudes toward love and marriage, her intimacy with Mewes is probably best understood as a sort of informal or casual dating relationship. Frieda was careful to keep the details of their relationship secret – a fact that stood out to nearly every member of her circle of friends.[24] Indeed, her closeness to Mewes was later of extreme interest to the police when investigating her murder. Frieda attempted to pass off Mewes to her friends, neighbors, and distant relatives as her uncle, and since he came to visit every four to six weeks, she had ample occasion to rehearse this ruse.[25] But few seem to have believed this. After all, they observed how, during bicycle outings, Frieda made sure to ride near Mewes and in fact grew visibly jealous whenever he was friendly to one of the other women or when another made

[23] Letter from Paul Schambach to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 98-100.

[24] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-9, 18-21, 39, 42, 71, 83.

[25] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 11, 78-81; Letter from Otto Mewes to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

the mistake of riding between them.[26] Eventually, they took to traveling together on their own. They enjoyed a walking and bicycling trip along the Rhein river and to Monte Carlo in 1913, and while Antonie Köhler, Frieda's best friend, came with them, Frieda and Mewes at some point broke off and traveled part of the way alone.[27] Mewes and his "Fritz," as he called her, thus enjoyed a curious – yet, as we will see, quintessentially modern – relationship, and their time spent together abated only when Mewes decided to move for good to the south of France, where, as he put it, it was easier to live as a vegetarian and "get by on my own."[28] Frieda still wrote him letters, though, and signed them "with a kiss" up until the day before she was killed.[29]

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Frieda Kliem, whom we witnessed struggling to get by and find connections in the metropolis in Chapter One, thus made not one but three intimate or potentially intimate acquaintances as she settled in to the big city and adapted herself to the modern world. In taking up bicycling and, significantly, showing herself willing to countenance the idea of relationships made in this way, Frieda had both a network of close friends and, at several points throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, male suitors with whom she enjoyed some degree of love and intimacy. But this experience (and success) was not merely the other side of a Janus-faced modern metropolis. Frieda's found intimacy was more than just the result of patience or of being in the city long enough that fate finally got around to blessing her with a fortuitous encounter of the kind of which – as we saw in Chapter One – so many Berliners dreamt. The big

[26] Statement by Anna Selka, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-9.

[27] Letter from Otto Mewes to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[28] Letter from Frieda Kliem to Otto Mewes, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95; Letter from Otto Mewes to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[29] Letter from Frieda Kliem to Otto Mewes, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

city, as this chapter will suggest, did create opportunities for single men and women at the turn of the century, but what lay behind those opportunities were fundamentally new avenues to and types of love and intimacy, and Berliners were faced with the choice of diving headlong into the choppy sea of modern love or remaining on the often lonely shores of tradition.

Modern Avenues to Love

Bicycling, as we have seen, opened the door to intimacy and love for Frieda Kliem, but it was hardly the only modern, urban avenue to love at the turn of the century. In fact, the explosion of the metropolis brought with it a whole host of new gathering spots, social offerings, and leisure activities that made it possible for men and women – especially those in their twenties – to attain what eluded one when she looked for traditional love in traditional ways (as in Chapter One). Two of the most remarkable things about the modern metropolis were, as we have said, crowds and movement, and while the whirling masses of people may have left one disoriented or with a blasé outlook, they also – viewed from a different angle – put urban dwellers in a position to make intimate connections. Moving day, for example, meant that one rarely stayed in the same place for more than six or twelve months, and new neighbors in some ways proved to be quite a good thing since apartment buildings themselves often served as a sort of matchmaker.[30] One writer even opined that apartments were a little slice of rural life in the big city: "Nearly everyone knows each other here. […] It's like in a small town."[31] Indeed, another writer claimed that she shared a "window acquaintance" with her neighbors, whose windows she

[30] Historians have studied apartment-level intimacy in a variety of contexts and concluded, generally, that apartments counteract the isolation one often encounters in a large city. See, for example, Ma, "Down the Alleyway"; Marcus, *Apartment Stories*; Alexander von Hoffman, *Local Attachments: The Making of an American Urban Neighborhood, 1850-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

[31] "Einsame Strassen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 21 July 1899, Nr. 169.

peered into every day.[32] Still another wrote that apartments offered one "a certain solidarity" with her neighbors – one that vanished once they passed from the apartment to the busy street.[33] Berlin was, in fact, filled with stories of people who met and fell in love because they lived on the same floor or in the same building. One Berlin woman remembered in her memoir at the end of her life that she met her husband precisely because, as lodgers at the same Charlottenburg boarding house, they ate lunch at the same table every day. They were married within a year or two.[34] The newspapers, too, reported on relationships that had germinated in apartment corridors and courtyards, such as that of the 23-year-old book printer and his 17-year-old bride who happened to live in the same apartment and share the same path to work.[35] There was also the young man who lived with his mother and fell in love with the middle-aged divorced woman living next door.[36]

The apartment-based romance was, in fact, popular enough that it featured in quite a few short stories, as well.[37] Paul Bliß's 1913 short story, "Liebe macht erfinderisch" ("Love will find a way"), for example, features a young woman who is locked out of the apartment she shares

[32] "Gegenüber: Indiskrete Beobachtungen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 September 1910, Nr. 448. Of course, watching/spying on one's neighbors was a common theme of short stories, as well. Mascha von Kretschman wrote in 1913 that while ground-floor tenants lack a balcony, they alone possess a hidden vantage point on the others – for example, on the newlyweds who use their balcony for intimacy. Mascha von Kretschman, "Berliner Balkons," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 June 1913, Nr. 165.

[33] Mascha von Kretschman, "Berliner Balkons," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 June 1913, Nr. 165.

[34] Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Kempowski Bio-Archiv 69, 30-31.

[35] "Das Liebesdrama im Tiergarten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 October 1909, Nr. 701.

[36] "In der Wohnung seiner Geliebten erschossen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 January 1901, Nr. 29. For a similar case, see "Zwei Liebestragödien," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 August 1905, Nr. 427.

[37] For example, Emil Peschkau, "Kätchens Mitgift," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 November 1898, Nr. 44; Alfred Friedmann, "Zum Maskenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 February 1907, Nr. 28; Helene-Hanna Kühn, "Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 17 August 1910, Nr. 191 (Unterhaltungsbeiblatt); A. Burg, "Fritz Wendekamp's Jugendliebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 September 1907, Nr. 206.

with her aunt one evening after coming home from work. Her aunt is gone, though she had earlier informed the neighbor – a young, single man of her niece's age – of her whereabouts and asked him to come fetch her when the niece showed up. The man uses this to his advantage and tells the locked-out niece only that he will wait with her until the aunt returns from wherever she has gone. After he quite chivalrously produces some candles when the hall lights go out, he flirts with her and eventually professes his love for her, brushing off her avowals of middle-class respectability by telling her he will be patient. He then offers to take her to her aunt, confessing that he has known where she has been the entire time. "And you're just telling me this now!" she exclaims. "I needed to take advantage of this opportunity," he responds, as he kisses the hand of his smiling neighbor.[38]

Bliß's story offers the perfect picture of the big city apartment as a modern avenue to love, for both characters show themselves willing to adapt to the conditions of the modern city. The man resorts to this innocent trickery because, as he puts it, he had no other way; and the woman must move beyond her initial claim that she does not spend time with men without a chaperone. Moreover, while the man does at one point mention the word fortuity (*Zufall*), this invocation of the much beloved term is completely different than the starry-eyed faith in chance encounters we saw in Chapter One, for here he takes an active role in arranging his own amorous destiny. Whereas a traditional, middle-class morality more often than not kept Berliners from doing anything other than waiting for their stars to align, a modern, maverick sensibility regarding love quite frequently put young or uninhibited Berliners in intimate contact with one another.

[38] Paul Bliß, "Liebe macht erfinderisch," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 21 June 1913, Nr. 167.

If the confines and small town dynamics of apartment buildings in a way counteracted the enormity of the modern metropolis, the economic pressures of big city life and the resulting popularity of *Schlafburschen* (lodgers) occasioned even more numerous connections, not least because of the intimacy that the lodger-host(ess) relationship inevitably created (though it also occasionally cut short potential intimacy, for landladies often objected to the presence of women in their tenants' apartments late at night and sometimes even cut short the lease as a result).[39] *Schlafburschen*, while individually somewhat itinerant, were nevertheless a permanent fixture in nearly every Berlin apartment building; as it turns out, so, too, were love relationships between *Schlafburschen* and their landladies or hostesses.[40] For that matter, even longer-term, traditional rental agreements between single men and their landladies brought potential mates together, most frequently in the pairing of a young, bachelor renter and his landlady's daughter.[41] Some of these cases were, admittedly, adulterous and more or less doomed to fizzle out; but for the frequency with which such cases appeared in the newspaper, it is clear that landladies and their families often offered something of a circle of acquaintances, however small, to men living on their own in the city.

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[39] Gerhard Lüdtke, *Mein Leben*, Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Kempowski Bio-Archiv 183, 109.

[40] There was the case, for example, of the young fireman who lodged with a married couple in the summer and fall of 1905 and lent a sympathetic ear to the complaints of the wife about her unhappy marriage. Their "harmony of souls" turned into intimacy and professions of love, and the husband ultimately agreed to a divorce so as to prevent the two from committing suicide together. "Ein liebestoller junger Mann," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 21 November 1906, Nr. 593. For other examples, see "Ein Ehebruchsdrama," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 21 January 1903, Nr. 34; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 26 September 1909, Nr. 655; "Ein eifersüchtiger Ehemann," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 November 1909, Nr. 742.

[41] For example, "Eine Hochzeit mit Hindernissen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 October 1899; "Eine blutige Liebestragödie," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 January 1904, Nr. 43; "Der Mord an der Alice Ratowski vor Gericht," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 January 1910, Nr. 19. For an example of this type of relationship as the topic of fiction, see Franz Scott, *Die Tanzfee: Das Drama der Treue*, vol. 78 of *Intime Geschichten* (Berlin: Berliner Roman-Verlag, 1905).

Even more horizon-expanding than the apartment building or tenant-landlady relationship was the workplace. For "modern" working- and lower-middle-class Berliners alike, one's work milieu often provided a shortcut to making acquaintances in a vast, impersonal city of millions. It is true, as Stefan Bajohr has noted, that working-class men and women did not usually work side by side in factories at the turn of the century and thus did not frequently find marriage partners or love interests among their work colleagues.[42] But factory work, while extraordinarily common, was by no means the only employment for Berliners around 1900, and a wide variety of white- and blue-collar jobs – from waitresses to maidservants to taxi drivers to office clerks – did, in fact, occasion the workplace mingling of men and women. For working-class Berliners, it was often the building and location, not the job itself, that served as the catalyst for connection (though certain jobs – like, for example, that of the newspaper saleswoman – did occasion frequent interaction with a wide-variety of Berliners).[43] Whether it was a young waitress who fell in love with a taxi driver working out of the same building;[44] a jeweler's apprentice who worked in the same building as a maidservant;[45] a beer distributor and a young women recently hired as a servant to a family in the same building;[46] or newly-arrived Berliners working in the same hotel, single Berliners found that the orbits of their work movements intersected with those of others who also longed for love.[47]

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[42] Stefan Bajohr, "Partnerinnenwahl im Braunschweiger Arbeitermilieu, 1900-1933," *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 2, no. 3 (2003), 91.

[43] "Das Fräulein im Kiosk," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 April 1911, Nr. 92.

[44] "Erste Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 20 July 1901, Nr. 168.

[45] "Verschmähte Liebe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 August 1901, Nr. 400.

[46] "Selbstmordversuch eines Liebespaares," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 March 1903, Nr. 150.

[47] "Aus Liebesgram," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 May 1902, Nr. 203.

More interesting still were intimacies that developed between white-collar colleagues, for these jobs were, themselves, fundamentally new and modern, and they were the landing places for an entire generation of young women seeking independence and work identities in jobs as salesgirls, typists, secretaries, and even office clerks. These were the employees that Siegfried Kracauer famously analyzed in his study of white-collar workers, *Die Angestellten*; and while Kracauer described these clerks, salesmen, and office-workers as solitary types who sought an escape in trivial amusements and leisure and attempted, as David Frisby summarized, to escape "their own inner existence," they were also, in Kracauer's estimation, wholly divorced from traditional moral strictures – middle-class obstacles that, as we saw in Chapter One, prevented not a few urban relationships from blossoming and fed Berliners' fantasy about fortuitous encounters.[48] Kracauer was, of course, writing in the late 1920s, when (lower) middle-class morality was certainly different than at the turn of the century; and it is no doubt true that many or perhaps even most middle-class men and women considered a relationship with a work colleague a scandalous breach of morality around 1900. Indeed, one publicized court case from 1910 revolved around the question of whether a woman could quit her job as a salesgirl without notice because her boss had proposed marriage to her (the court ruled that the well-intentioned advances of her boss did not provide justification for a resignation without notice).[49]

Still, as news reports, diaries, and short stories from the turn of the century demonstrate, modern-thinking men and women who were willing to move beyond the barriers of middle-class morality vis-à-vis "correct" forms of meeting and dating did, indeed, find success when they considered their colleagues or business partners as potential mates. There was, for example, the

[48] Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, 115; Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Angestellten. Aus dem neuesten Deutschland* (Frankfurt/Main: Frankfurter Societätsdruckerei, 1930).

[49] "Der Heiratsantrag des Chefs," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 February 1910, Nr. 33.

case of the department store security guard who fell in love with a salesgirl who worked in the area he patrolled, not to mention the doctor and nurse who both worked at the Charité hospital and developed an intimate relationship.[50] One woman wrote to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* for advice after she had fallen in love with a (married) work colleague, and Aimée Gaber's 1911 short story, "Seine Braut" ("His Bride"), plays on the theme of a woman's distrust of her fiancé, who works in an office full of attractive and aggressive women.[51] Short plays also featured office romances that went against the grain, as, for example, in Rudolf Schwarz's play, *Liebesleute* (*Lovers*), where a factory manager falls for his secretary, as well as in well-known playwright Paul Lehnhard's comedy, *Die Liebe im Kontor* (*Love in the Office*), which riffs on the way the men of the office cannot help themselves from flirting with the female employees.[52]

The most interesting case is probably that of Helene Kuërs, for her path to marriage reveals nicely the dissatisfaction with traditional dating, the careful adoption of a modern method, and the complexities of trying to fit these two sensibilities together. Helene, a Berlin woman whose childhood and adolescence included all of the staples of a middle-class upbringing (swimming lessons, dance class, etc.), recalled in her memoir the way her marriage had come about. Though there had been at least one suitor in her teenage years, Helene had reached her mid-twenties without finding a man she wanted to marry. After finishing her schooling, she thus trained as a photographer's assistant and began earning money of her own. When she was forced to take a new job in 1901, she found work as a secretary in a large machine shop, which involved

[50] "Das Liebesdrama im Tiergarten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 October 1909, Nr. 701; "Liebesgeschichten aus der Charité," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 November 1909, Nr. 759.

[51] "Briefkasten: Lottchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 November 1904, Nr. 541; Aimée Gaber, "Seine Braut," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 December 1911, Nr. 332.

[52] Rudolf Schwarz, *Liebesleute* (Berlin: Berliner Theater-Verlag, 1909) (Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-05-02, Nr. 4782); Paul Lehnhard, *Die Liebe im Kontor: Posse mit Gesang in einem Akt* (Mühlhausen i. Thür: Druck und Verlag von G. Danner, 1899).

answering the telephone, doing the bookkeeping, and writing out the correspondence her boss dictated to her. This last task had her moving frequently between her little office with the kitchenette and wobbly table to the shop where Friedrich, her boss, spent most of his time. Helene remembered that they often spoke in the evenings when Friedrich came to sign the letters she had prepared and how, on one particular evening, he mentioned to her that he was interested in getting married but could not find a suitable wife. "I told him he should go dancing, but he says he can't dance." "After a short pause," she continued, "he looks at me strangely and says, 'I would like to have you as my wife and thus ask you, will you marry me?'" Helene remembered that she was shocked he would ask her this so directly and was not sure how to respond. After a pause, she answered that she had to ask her parents. "So we agreed that if I did not come to work the next day that he could go to my parents and ask for permission. So I did not go to work the next day, and on Saturday my boss came with a bouquet of roses to ask for my and my father's approval."[53]

Helene's roundabout and clumsy solution to Friedrich's proposal suggests that a pairing with her boss – not to mention someone who was also outside of her family's social circle – was unconventional and potentially disreputable. And yet, at the same time, Helene and Friedrich, like so many others, found in a modern method – in this case, the workplace – the success that had previously eluded them. In this, their story was actually quite typical. In fact, Helene could well have been the inspiration for the many short stories and works of fiction that played on the theme of office romance. In the 1912 short story, "Der Andere" ("The Other One"), for example, an older man named Georg proposes marriage to his secretary in the same off-hand (and utterly unromantic) way, though he only does so because he cannot admit to her that he has fallen in

[53] Helene Kuërs, *Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben* (1954), Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Signatur 11581 II,2, 16-17.

love with her. "You are no longer so young," he tells her one day, adding, "I think we are past tip-toeing around each other's feelings." Noting that he is a "creature of habit" and that he likes her so much as a secretary, he proposes that they get married as a practical arrangement so that he never loses her – as his secretary. Lore accepts, and only after they are married do they admit to each other that they love each other and feel their lives beginning anew.[54]

Georg and Lore's marriage, brokered under the guise of convenience, as well as Helene Kuërs's guarded response to her boss's proposal (that she had to ask her parents), both underscore the point that flouting traditional mores vis-à-vis relationships born out of the workplace was not without its risks; after all, aside from social censure, one could be fired for dating a colleague (or, worse, a competitor's colleague, as happened to Irma B. in 1907), though courts usually ruled that such a firing was unlawful and required restitution and back-pay.[55] Still, it appears that, for those Berliners willing to be transgressive in matters of love and dating in the office, the reward – connection – was worth it. Indeed, some Berliners even argued that love found in these ways were actually more trustworthy than the traditional methods because they avoided the pressures and charades of family visits. Berliners were, as the writer Paul Kirstein noted in 1902, "in complete agreement that the relationships that develop in the hustle and bustle of one's work life are preferable to those constrained by domesticity and by the presence of family," where one puts on deceptively blissful airs.[56] One, in other words, showed (more of) his true self at work.

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[54] A. Reitske, "Der Andere," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 September 1912, Nr. 244.

[55] "Das 'Verhältnis' der Verkäuferin," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 March 1907, Nr. 143; "Das Liebesverhältnis als Entlassungsgrund," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 August 1910, Nr. 434.

[56] Paul A Kirstein, "Wie sie sich kennen lernen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 November 1902, Nr. 264.

Love found in apartment corridors, behind department store counters, and at bookkeepers' desks was modern insofar as it defied long-standing mores about love and dating, even if patterns of work were themselves not particularly remarkable for their modern qualities (the new employment of women notwithstanding). There was, however, another kind of modern love: connections that were made through activities that were fundamentally new at the turn of the century. Modern sports, especially the growing number of women playing them, were no doubt one of the more publicized such diversions.[57] Bicycling, as we have said, was chief among these, though golf, skating, and tennis were popular, as well. Viktor Hollaender's cabaret, *Die Nacht von Berlin* (*Berlin at Night*), for example, focused in one song on the fact that Berlin girls were "nowadays" dedicating themselves to sports:

> *West-end girls with toned calves chomp at the bit*
> *For tennis tourneys that keep their muscles fit* […].[58]

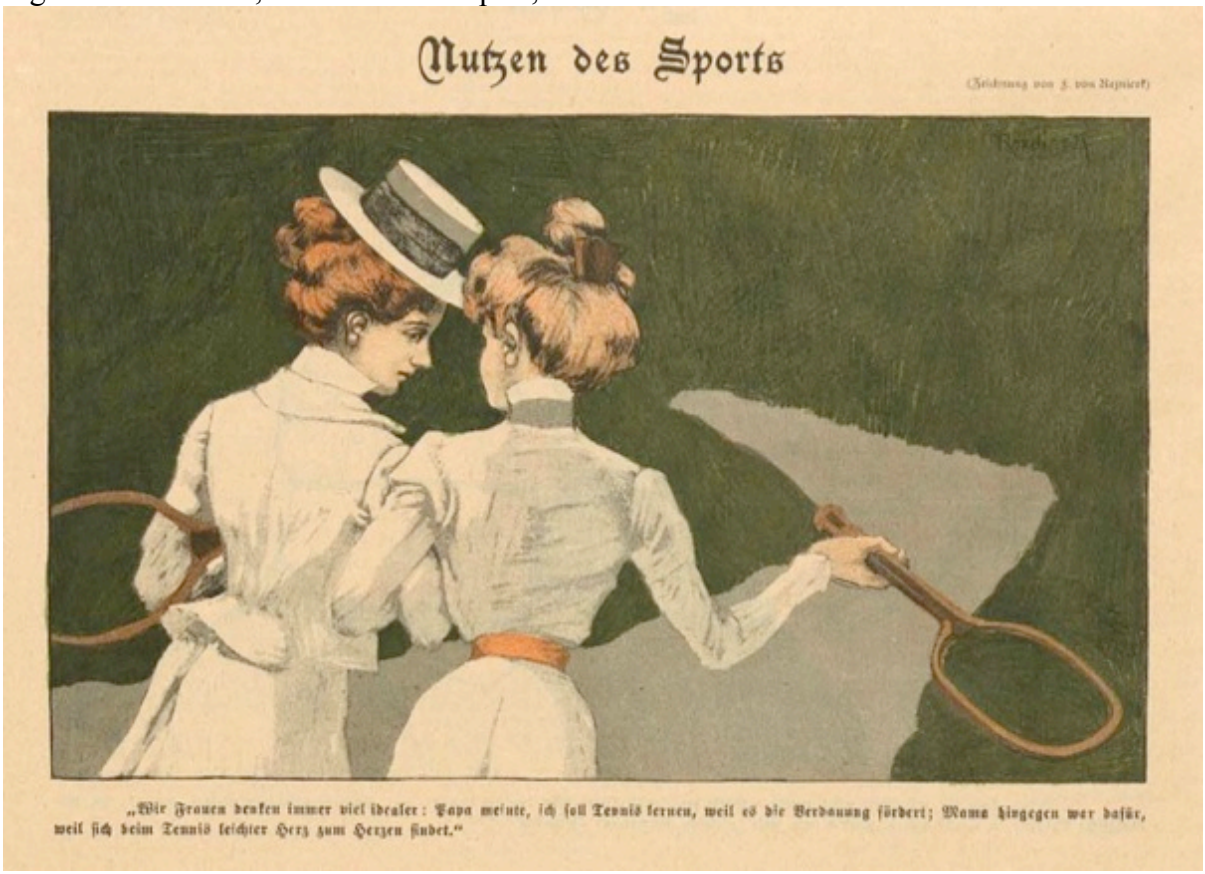
Tennis, especially, was the most popular activity of the "modern girls" that filled the pages of short stories and feuilletonistic sketches of modern, urban life, though we should note that women whose families could afford tennis were in a completely different realm than lower-middle-class folk like Frieda Kliem (who, notwithstanding her efforts to hold on to middle-class status, probably never even dreamt of playing tennis). And while one observer suggested that "the sport itself is the main thing," he admitted that the men and women who mixed while playing tennis, golf, or even hockey "happily accept all of the attendant perks thereof."[59] Sports were, increasingly, being used as opportunities to socialize with love interests, and they often allowed couples some unchaperoned time to themselves. Elisabeth Bäcker, a seventeen-year-old

[57] A. von Wartenberg, "Amor in der Sommerfrische," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 August 1903, Nr. 364.

[58] Viktor Hollaender, *Die Nacht von Berlin* (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1914), 26.

[59] Heinz Tovote, "Die Berlinerin: Mädchen aus Berlin W.," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 December 1909, Nr. 339.

Figure 2.5: Cartoon, "The Value of Sport," 1900.



(Source: "Nutzen des Sports," *Simplicissimus* 13 (1900): 104.)

girl from the provinces who came to stay with her (upper-middle-class) relatives in Berlin and earn some money as a housekeeper, wrote in her diary that while the man she loved, Gero Kinzel, was engaged to another woman (but loved Elizabeth), they enjoyed their own bit of intimacy in activities like tennis.[60] Quite a few plots of short stories, too, relied on sports to position a blossoming and independent protagonist close to her desired mate.[61] The satirical magazine, *Simplicissimus*, put its own spin on this theme in a 1900 cartoon entitled "The Value of Sport," which features two women discussing the way "hearts find each other more easily"

[60] Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Kempowski Bio-Archiv 3931/1-2, 21.

[61] For example, Berg, *Die Radler-Marie*; Arthur Zapp, "Die Liebesprobe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 June 1902, Nr. 126; Marin Proskauer, "Der ehrliche Brief," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 April 1912, Nr. 103; Hugo von Gießen, "Freds Liebeswerden," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 April 1902, Nr. 99.

through tennis.[62] As with bicycling, a young woman's participation in sports was often short-hand for her emancipation from the restrictive femininity of her mother and grandmother, as the ever-insightful Dorothee Goebeler noted in a 1907 piece on the growing chasm between mothers and "modern" daughters.[63] Her readers saw it too, though they tried to suggest that mothers were, more and more, "allowing" their daughters to play tennis and skate and study and were thus perhaps evolving, too.[64] Either way, it is clear that sports – and young women's often-unchaperoned participation in them – were an emerging and non-traditional path to relationships for young men and women.[65] And for women, specifically, sports were also a degree more accessible and acceptable than work, particularly for middle-class women whose families would have objected strenuously to their employment in a shop or an office. Goebeler pointed out that sports simply "continue what work has started," though we might go a step further and suggest that sports expanded to many what work started for some.[66]

Paths to love were also changing at the hands of various new technologies – most notably, the telephone – that served to link strangers in intimate ways. The most interesting such case is no doubt the "how they met" story of "Frau B." and her husband. Responding to a journalist's request for real stories of "how they met," Frau B. overruled the objections of her

[62] "Nutzen des Sports," *Simplicissimus* 13 (1900), 104.

[63] Dorothee Goebeler, "Mütter von gestern und Töchter von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 September 1907, Nr. 466.

[64] "Öffentliche Meinung: Mütter und Töchter von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 October 1907, Nr. 521.

[65] On the contested role of sports in the emancipation of women, see Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986); J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park (eds.), *From "Fair Sex" to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (London: Frank Cass, 1987); also Kathleen McCrone, *Playing the Game: Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women, 1870-1914* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1988), though her discussion focuses more on sports in women's schools and colleges than the role of sports in unstructured leisure activities.

[66] Dorothee Goebeler, "Wie Mädchen altern," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 April 1914, Nr. 211.

husband and told readers how she had met her husband because "it might possibly free many from a giant prejudice." "I met my dear, good husband over the telephone," she wrote, cutting straight to the chase:

> I was employed as a telephone operator on Lützowstrasse. Among my numbers was a business on Kurfürstenstrasse from which, with extreme frequency, the same man always called. He was so polite and friendly that I – even though it was technically forbidden – usually gave him preference when he asked to be connected. He always thanked me and wished me good day and happy holidays, and one day he appeared at our office. I was, of course, stunned, but he claimed that the telephone in his office was broken and that he needed to make an urgent call -- -- Ok, I thought to myself, no harm in that. But that evening, as I was leaving to walk home, he was standing there on the street. And he started talking to me! Of course very meekly and politely; he showed me every possible form of identification and was in every way a true gentleman. I finally allowed him to walk with me. And I was happy that he kept coming. […] What should I say – we got engaged and married, and if you would like to see if this relationship made through over the telephone was a good one, then come by and see our happiness for yourself. It couldn't have been better if a thousand mothers and fathers had arranged it.[67]

What is notable here is Frau B.'s somewhat combative tone regarding the way she met her husband (not to mention the enduring tension between modern approaches and traditional respectability displayed so clearly in the man's almost comical production of proper identification), and while the end result was the same (or better, as she guarantees readers) as marriages made through traditional means, it is clear that this was not always the case. Relationships made through or nurtured by the telephone were not necessarily less successful, but they were, as one columnist pointed out in a 1914 front-page piece in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, potentially quite different in nature precisely because of the way modern technology allowed one to interact. The telephone, as the author pointed out, was so revolutionary because it enabled the direct and real-time connection of the two conversing parties – something extraordinarily useful for business correspondence. This was, of course, also very useful in

[67] Paul A Kirstein, "Wie sie sich kennen lernen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 November 1902, Nr. 264.

intimate matters, as it allowed lovers to remain connected in a way even if they were apart. "But the prompt settlement of matters, which, in business transactions, is so perfect, reveals itself over time – if not immediately – to be not without its risks in matters of love," the author warned. The expediency of the telephone, it seems, was making lovers less patient, less able to abide a lull or delay in communication, for "lovers with telephones don't write letters." If anything (for example, if the line is busy), they write postcards, which "replace a peek into one's soul with a view of a pretty landscape scene."[68]

The contrast between an effusive letter and a sort of placid, perfunctory postcard scene is powerful, and it underlines the point that modern avenues to and technologies of love were, importantly, changing the way people thought about love. Scholars have long spoken of a shift from traditional to modern love, from practical or arranged relationships (or patriarchal marriage, as it were) to companionate unions based on love and sentiment throughout the course of nineteenth century (or even earlier), and this is without a doubt an appealing and rather romantic thesis.[69] What we see with regard to new and emerging technologies of love at the turn of the century, however, is not simply a shift from reason to affect but rather an increasingly practical

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[68] El-Correi, "Der Fernsprecher und die -- -- Liebe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 July 1914, Nr. 362.

[69] For example, Collins, *Modern Love*; Coontz, *Marriage, a History*; Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 3; Andrew J. Cherlin, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), chapter 3; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper's Torch Books, 1979); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London: Collins, 1976). Others have challenged the notion that marriage – especially the position of women in it – really changed all that significantly, pointing out, as does James Hammerton, that "companionate marriage constituted little more than a conditionally attenuated form of patriarchal marriage, part of a transition from one form of patriarchy to another." James Hammerton, "Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 2 (Winter 1990), 270. Other critiques include Susan M. Okin, "Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11 (1982): 65-88; Peter Borscheid, "Romantic Love or Material Interest: Choosing Partners in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of Family History* 11, no. 2 (1986): 157-168. On the interesting tension between contemporary views about the "marriage of reason" and the "marriage of inclination," see Patricia Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

approach to *finding* someone about whom one felt strongly at that moment. As Nielandt, the protagonist in Erich Köhrer's 1909 novel, *Warenhaus Berlin: Ein Roman aus der Weltstadt* (*Berlin Department Store: A Novel from the World City*), puts it,

> Love and happiness, wealth and peace, satisfaction, a delight in nature, art, culture: we no longer calmly select and enjoy these at our ease! Instead we rush into purchases, for carefully calculated chance has placed all the various possibilities, neatly presented, in our path! As people pass along the street, they acquire whatever suggests itself, without lengthy deliberation, intoxicated by the sensation of the fleeting moment![70]

Rudolf Lothar, the perceptive newspaper columnist, agreed with the assertion of a book he was reviewing that modern, urban love was not so much about finding one's soul mate but about the feeling itself of loving ("the feeling, not the object, is the main thing").[71] It seems, moreover, that a practical search for love often positioned its happy discoverer to love differently. Approaching relationships more practically – countenancing the thought of finding love on the street or over the telephone, for example – had the unsurprising effect of making love easier to find. If modern lovers were less patient because of the telephone, they were, Lothar acknowledged, also less sentimental, less emotional about love. "Only in the provinces" is the sentimental method at all common, he pointed out. The front-page piece on the telephone put it similarly: "Longing is left to great-grandmothers […]. Youth laughs in the face of [longing]. It laughs at tears and the pain of love." Indeed, the telephone had nearly eliminated longing altogether. See for yourself, the author suggested: "In movie theaters, pretty young metropolitans laugh at the tears of the young sailor who sees his beloved torn from his arms." Indeed, "the youthful section of the theater

[70] Erich Köhrer, *Warenhaus Berlin: Ein Roman aus der Weltstadt* (Berlin: Wedekind, 1909), 22-23, quoted in Whyte and Frisby, *Metropolis Berlin*, 97-98.

[71] Rudolf Lothar, "Wie erobert man eine Frau," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 September 1908, Nr. 455.

always laughs coldly at the same tragic scene." For young people, the article concluded, love is "nothing more than a rendezvous arranged by telephone."[72]

It is, of course, possible to interpret such an article as the cantankerous lament of an older Berliner disgusted with the flippancy and shortsightedness of turn-of-the-century youth; but this reading does not hold up in the face of the many articles and short stories that portrayed a novel and more practical approach to love and relationships in the modern metropolis. The generational aspect of this (specious) reading is worth lingering on, however, for this shift in approaches to love was very much a rejection of "when grandfather took grandmother" ("longing is left for great-grandmothers," as it were). Berliners' willingness to look for love in new ways and new places – indeed, to think about love differently – did not break down perfectly by age or vintage (Frieda Kliem was, in her thirties, no doubt quite a bit more adventurous than many more conventional teenagers), but, as we saw in Chapter One, "old" versus "new/modern" is a compelling and useful way to think about the way love was changing at the turn of the century.

Evening Balls: Between Old and New

The conflict between old and new becomes particularly apparent if we examine the centuries-old tradition of the evening social ball. Balls, of course, long served the upper class as a tailor-made opportunity to see and be seen, to demarcate their social position as against other classes, and to pair off under the eyes of mothers eager to marry off their daughters. There were so-called "public balls" (which were, in fact, not public at all; "prominent" might be the better term), such as the exclusive *Presseball*, whose guest list, what with its heavy representation of royalty, dignitaries, and luminaries of the arts, read more like a state dinner than a social affair; and there were the private, "house balls" that more closely resembled the kinds of evening

[72] El-Correi, "Der Fernsprecher und die – Liebe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 July 1914, Nr. 362.

gatherings we see portrayed in classic eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to Theodore Fontane's *Effi Briest*. Especially in the case of private balls, young women from well-to-do families saw in these evenings their best – and often only – chance for love and marriage (though, because they usually had little choice in the matter, they often got only the latter); and parents – hovering mothers and austere fathers – realized that it was at balls that many a good match was to be made. We see this old story of well-bred daughter meets fetching young officer replayed time and again in short stories and serial novels, even into the first decade of the twentieth century. A. von Eremit's short story, "Die erste Balleinladung" ("The First Ball Invitation"), for example, takes readers into the world of a teenager, Erika, who is finally old enough to attend a ball and is, naturally, agog at the excitement the evening will bring. "The invitation had been laying on the calling card tray in the parlor for eight days," the story begins. "Erika has already picked it up a dozen times, seeing that it says very clearly, 'Fräulein daughter [is invited], as well.' The invitation to her first ball!" She is, of course, afraid of being a wallflower, of having no one to dance with, and she practices dancing with her brother the night before. "And now it's finally here, the long-awaited ball evening!" The ball begins, she finds her dance card immediately filled, and she goes through the various dances – the quadrille, the waltz, the mazurka, the cotillion – as if in a dream. She even tries to wade through the crowd of whirling couples to her mother so she can tell her all about it right in the middle, but there is no time: the next dance is already starting. By the early morning hours, when the dance is winding down and her father is already asleep in the car, Erika has danced with many different men – all true gentlemen – and talks and sings about it all the way home. And at the end of the ball season – referred to in shorthand simply as "the season" (*Saison*) – there appeared an ad in

Figure 2.6: 1904's hottest hairdos and dresses, as pictured in the *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1904.

(Source: Martha, "Ball- und Gesellschaftsmode," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 February 1904, Nr. 32.)

the local paper: "We are honored to announce the engagement of our daughter Erika to Herrn Max Liebenberg, etc."[73] Everything had gone according to plan and tradition.

The case of the future Mrs. Max Liebenberg was only one of many similar stories – both real and fictitious – in Berlin at the turn of the century, and, together, they were part of a larger idée fixe about balls as a – or *the* – path to intimacy and marriage.[74] Mothers obsessed over whether their daughters would be the ones who were "left sitting" (*sitzenbleiben* – literally: to fail, as in failing a school grade) or standing as wallflowers and become "ball veterans," that is,

[73] A. von Eremit, "Die erste Balleinladung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 21 January 1913, Nr. 20.

[74] Edmund Edel, "Die Zeit der Bälle," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 January 1909, Nr. 43; Theo von Torn, "Damenwahl," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 February 1902, Nr. 38; J. Lorm, "Der Subskriptionsball," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 February 1903, Nr. 89; Arthur Zapp, "Die Liebesprobe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 June 1902, Nr. 126; Paul A Kirstein, "Die Lösung des Problems," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 July 1901, Nr. 173; Rosa Auspitzer, "Eine Ballnacht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 January 1905, Nr. 22; Olga Steiner, *Heiratskandidatinnen; oder: Wie junge Mädchen lieben: Lustspiel in einem Akt* (Berlin: Theater-Buchhandlung Eduard Bloch, 1896); Marie Dabs, *Lebenserinnerungen*, Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Kempowski Bio-Archiv 995; Otto Elster, "Judiths Ehe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 October 1910, Nr. 241 (Unterhaltungs-Beilage); Betty Rittweger, "Letzte Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 February 1911, Nr. 46; Elin Ameen, "Nur ein Flirt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 March 1904, Nr. 55; "Verlobt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 11 February 1899, Nr. 36.

soon-to-be spinsters;[75] daughters, seeing in balls their best shot at love, scrutinized the words and behavior of their dance partners, as, for example, in the case of the woman who wrote to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*'s advice column asking if an especially long squeeze of the hand at a ball portended marriage;[76] and newspapers published full-page ads and articles about the latest ball fashions for the coming "season."[77] The young women themselves were hardly to blame for this ball madness, though; it was all they knew, and they had been conditioned to expect this from balls from an early age. There were, after all, so-called *Kinderbälle*, balls for children, even if a vocal few thought this was going too far.[78] And nearly every upper- and upper-middle-class couple sent its pre-pubescent children to dance lessons that mimicked the grown-up world of etiquette, dance cards, and white-gloved hands and prepared young Berliners for a successful debut when that first ball invitation arrived. Indeed, most teenagers' very first ball was actually the beloved dance class ball (*Tanzstundenball*), which was both the course's final exam and a junior-high-dance-like first experiment with love, intimacy, and pairing off. The columnist Wilhelm von Buttlar paints us a picture of the nerves and hopes tied up in this big moment:

> Our Fritz, the proud sixth-grader with the nascent ornament of manliness on his upper lip, has been a little distracted and obviously worried about the desired blinding whiteness of his necktie and gloves for the past few days. No wonder! Today is the dance class ball that has been eagerly anticipated for weeks, and it is the duty of an up-and-coming cavalier to pay particular attention to his appearance on such a day. Fritz has even used his allowance to buy a few pretty

[75] A. von Wartenberg, "Saisonanfang," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 November 1903, Nr. 536; Wilhelmine Buchholz, "Ballmütter in Wahrheit und Dichtung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 December 1904, Nr. 605; "Das Heiratsalter moderner Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 January 1902, Nr. 26; Hedwig Neumann, "Berliner Bälle," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 13 February 1910, Nr. 43.

[76] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 February 1903, Nr. 89.

[77] "Neuheiten für die Ball-Saison," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 24 January 1904, Nr. 20; Martha, "Ball- und Gesellschaftsmode," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 February 1904, Nr. 32.

[78] H. N., "Der Kinderball," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 January 1909, Nr. 14; "Das Publikum: Kinderbälle," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 February 1913, Nr. 46.

> roses in secret. He wishes to give them to Fräulein Lisbeth during the cotillion. […] Our enthusiastic Fritz has, furthermore, prepared an especially witty conversation for the intermission. He will naturally lead Lisbeth to a table, and, after he has procured for her a mountain of rolls and pudding (hopefully there is chocolate) and sauce and cake and candy and – anyway, whatever else there'll be, he will, he has decided, whisper to her the sweet avowal of his love. And she will at first blush and look around shyly to see if anyone saw them whispering, and then she will – yes, certainly, it cannot possibly happen any differently – covertly squeeze his hand under the table and gaze with her lovely, sweet, storybook eyes into his as a silent and yet so telling answer. […] So he will, of course, get engaged to Lisbeth today, and when parting, as he places her jacket around her in the coat room – today our Fritz is a hero who will attempt anything – he will ever so quickly and secretly sneak a kiss on that tantalizing tiny lock of hair on her neck. Yes, he certainly will. And then they'll run into each other "totally by chance," and then -- -- […].[79]

We are, of course, meant to chuckle knowingly at Fritz's youthful naïveté and hormone-driven confidence, but Buttlar's sketch is hardly pastiche (as so many other portrayals of the dance class ball confirm);[80] teenagers and parents alike took the dance class ball very seriously, not least because no few marriages grew out of dance class ball pairings.[81] As such, even those who, as members of the petit bourgeoisie, could hardly afford the extravagance of private dance classes for their children (and who generally did not place much importance on aping the customs and sensibilities of the upper class) felt compelled to participate, and they often exchanged dance class ball etiquette advice and tips for doing it on the cheap in the newspaper, so important was this ritual of middle-class adolescence.[82] The dance class ball was even, as one writer so eloquently put it, "the end of a period of childhood. The young girl rapidly matures into the

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[79] Wilh. V. Buttlar, "Aus der Ball-Saison," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 February 1908, Nr. 59.

[80] Zoë, "'Mit Herren,'" *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 December 1907, Nr. 285; R. G., "Der letzte Tanzstundenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 February 1904, Nr. 50; L. Marco, "Tanzstunde," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 October 1904, Nr. 256.

[81] L. Marco, "Tanzstunde," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 October 1904, Nr. 256.

[82] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 March 1906, Nr. 133; "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 January 1903, Nr. 41; "Das Publikum: Tanzstundenluxus," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 October 1908, Nr. 252.

young lady, she soon views life and society through different eyes, and no ball can bring back the magic of that first one."[83]

There is just a hint of wistfulness in this memory of the dance class ball, a sense of a golden age that has passed, and there was, more generally, a sense that balls were not simply different than one dreamed they might be but were actually becoming something fundamentally new at the turn of the century. One of the most easily recognized symptoms of this transition between old and new was the increasingly widespread feeling – at least among younger generations of Berliners – that balls were passé and old-fashioned. The always-insightful columnist A. von Wartenberg observed in 1907 that "modern" women no longer trembled with nervous excitement when thinking about upcoming balls or a young cavalier coming to their table at the ball and asking them to dance. Nowadays, he wrote, women who do so "belong to a dying breed."[84] Modern men, for their part, were growing tired of overbearing mothers and their ball-crazy daughters and were simply refusing to dance, which was, to say the least, a disconcerting trend to Berlin women.[85] Exasperated women – for example, "Annette," in a reader letter poem meant to provoke a flood of responses – accused them of being too nonchalant at balls and demanded, "Are you too drunk from beer? Is dancing embarrassing? Are you afraid to sweat? […] Why do you leave us sitting?"[86] When pressed to explain why they no longer found it fashionable to dance, men cited their frustration with the fact that balls were so focused

[83] R. G., "Der letzte Tanzstundenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 February 1904, Nr. 50.

[84] A. von Wartenberg, "Moderne Frauen-Typen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 January 1907, Nr. 1.

[85] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 October 1900, Nr. 506; Alfred Holzbock, "Mitten in der Gesellschafts-Saison," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 January 1906, Nr. 14; A. von Wartenberg, "Von der Tanzunlust der Herren," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 February 1907, Nr. 74.

[86] "Öffentliche Meinung: Eine 'Tanzfrage,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 November 1909, Nr. 737.

Figure 2.7: "Opposites rub shoulders," 1906.

(Source: W. T., "Berliner Maskenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 18 February 1906, Nr. 41.)

on marriage and courting and finding a spouse under the eyes of eagle-eyed mothers and stern fathers. "[A dance at a ball] doesn't have to be a dance that lasts one's entire life," Herbert G. declared in a 1909 reader letter.[87]

These same changes were affecting Berlin's famous masquerade balls, as well. Long touted as the home of the carnivalesque or the world turned upside down (where, for example, a monk danced intimately with a young woman), masked balls were nevertheless not immune to the changing tides of the modern world.[88] To be sure, one still saw robber barons, holy men, noblewomen, and adult babies riding the subway and omnibus on the way to masquerade balls,

[87] "Öffentliche Meinung: Eine 'Tanzfrage,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 November 1909, Nr. 750.

[88] Ch. Täuber, "Auf dem Maskenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 January 1903, Nr. 25; W. T., "Berliner Maskenball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 18 February 1906, Nr. 41; "Der Metropol-Theater-Ball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 January 1900, Nr. 5.

as a newspaper columnist observed;[89] Berliners still wrote to the advice column asking for costume ideas;[90] and newcomers to Berlin like Fritz Reinert still confided to their diaries that they had never had as much fun as at their first *Maskenball*;[91] but the tastes and goals of younger participants, at least, were changing ever so slightly. Max Pollaczek observed in a 1908 article the way that "a masquerade ball is for the blasé society of our metropolis a rather antiquated amusement." Instead, "one nowadays would rather be amused than amuse himself and those around him."[92]

Pollaczek's estimation of balls points to a growing sense of individualism that was about more than just funny costumes, crepe paper decorations, and dance music. The same spirit that saw men unwilling to dance and modern women relatively indifferent to the cavaliers they might dance with was fueling a gradual rethinking of balls altogether at the turn of the century. Berliners polled each other for "better ideas" for balls;[93] they complained that balls were too expensive;[94] and Berliners exploded the world of balls to better reflect the realities of the modern world. All sorts of new ball-types sprang up around the city – working-class balls, widows' balls, and balls for the deaf.[95] There were gay balls and lesbian balls, some of which attracted over 700

[89] Alfred Holzbock, "Ballsaison," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 February 1912, Nr. 89.

[90] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 15 January 1905, Nr. 25.

[91] Fritz Reinert, *Tagebuch 1902-3*, Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Signatur 1929, 89.

[92] Max Pollaczek, "Die Maske: Zum Beginn der Ballsaison," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 January 1908, Nr. 16.

[93] "Das Publikum: Bessere Ideen für Maskenbälle," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 March 1914, Nr. 73.

[94] "Das Publikum: Oeffentliche Bälle," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 31 January 1909, Nr. 26.

[95] M. L., "Die Berlinerin auf dem Ball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 March 1914, Nr. 59; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 26 January 1902, Nr. 43; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 October 1904, Nr. 511; Alfred Holzbock, "Ballfeste," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 March 1904, Nr. 117; "Der Wittwenball-Löwe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 February 1904, Nr. 33; Maximillian Wolff, "Maskenball der Taubstummen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 March 1901, Nr. 105.

people in a single evening.[96] There is even evidence that some entrepreneurs used balls for the very practical and prurient purposes, respectively, of holding job fairs and attracting clients for prostitutes.[97] One enterprising Berliner went as far as to arrange a service that allowed ball goers to rent a "cavalier" for the evening.[98]

This new approach extended to dance classes, as well. Berlin's newspapers noted the ways in which dance classes were now dominated not by emotions and the feeling of "our hearts mov[ing] for the first time like our feet" but instead by a very practical, businesslike approach aimed at mastering a dance (for example, the ultra-modern tango).[99] The columnist Else Krafft wrote in 1908 that there was a "fresh breeze" moving through modern-day dance classes, one that accommodated the styles and desires of the modern youth.[100] Young people, it turned out, wanted to dance, but, as Edmund Edel so astutely observed, "They don't dance to find suitors;

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[96] Paul Näcke, "Ein Besuch bei den Homosexuellen in Berlin," in Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht* (1904), edited by Manfred Herzer (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel: 1991), 172. For evidence of gay balls, see Magnus Hirschfeld, "Das Ergebnis der statistischen Untersuchungen über den Prozentsatz der Homosexuellen," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 6, no. 1 (1904), 121; *Eine männliche Braut. Aufzeichnungen eines Homosexuellen* (Berlin: Janssen Verlag, 1996), 90; Hans Ostwald, "Berliner Bilder: Allerlei Kaschemmen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 February 1905, Nr. 31; Arthur Brehmer, "Aus dem dunklen Berlin: Allerlei Bälle," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 February 1899, Nr. 33; *Das perverse Berlin* (Berlin: Rich. Eckstein Nachf., 1910), 128-129. See also *Goodbye to Berlin: 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: Eine Ausstellung des Schwulen Museums und der Akademie der Künste, 17. Mai bis 17. August 1997* (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1997), 72; Jens Dobler, *Von andern Ufern: Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain* (Berlin: Bruno Gmünder Verlag, 2003).

[97] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 February 1902, Nr. 67; Martha Hellmuth, "Eliteball in Halensee: Die lieben süssen Mädels," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 June 1901, Nr. 151.

[98] "Kavaliere -- gegen gleich bare Bezahlung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 June 1907, Nr. 305.

[99] K. E., "Tango-Typen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 November 1913, Nr. 328.

[100] Else Krafft, "Tanzstunden…," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 March 1908, Nr. 52.

they dance because it's fun."[101] Indeed, dancing had become a sort of sport, he continued, and the only thing that really mattered was "good dance music."[102]

Balls were becoming something new, something more youthful, practical, and modern. Upper-class balls featuring dashing cavaliers and perfectly-coiffed women gave way to working- and middle-class balls more focused on instant gratification, blithe flirtation, and some measure of intimacy – enough, in fact, that, by 1913, some of Berlin's more prudish ball-goers were complaining that there was far too much kissing going on and that they would boycott balls until something was changed.[103] Berliners who met at balls were, increasingly, more focused on having a good time than trying to discern their dance partners' intentions for marriage in the squeeze of a hand or the execution of a twirl. They developed ball-house boyfriends, they danced with reckless abandon, and the previously ubiquitous and vigilant "ball mothers" were now a rare sight.[104] There was, in other words, a practical, carefree atmosphere, one void, as Dorothee Goebeler put it, "of the risk and speculation of serious intentions."[105] A sense of individualism, freedom, and frivolity had taken over all but the most austere balls (for, to be sure, the famous *Presseball* remained as stilted and official as ever), and the very purpose of evening entertainment was conforming to the more impulsive, fleeting fancies of a younger generation. This is not to say that all balls changed, that one forgot about marriage altogether, or that ball goers were uninterested in relationships extending beyond the walls of the ballroom, for these

[101] Edmund Edel, "Berlin tanzt!" in *Berliner Nächte* (Berlin: Conrad Haber's Verlag, 1914), 96.

[102] Ibid., 77.

[103] Eugen Isolani, "Vom Küssen und von Küssen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 31 January 1913, Nr. 30.

[104] Arthur Brehmer, "Aus dem dunklen Berlin: Die Balllokale," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 November 1898, Nr. 38; Alfred Holzbock, "Ballsaison," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 February 1912, Nr. 89; Dorothee Goebeler, "Der Herr, der tanzt," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 February 1914, Nr. 87.

[105] Dorothee Goebeler, "Der Herr, der tanzt," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 February 1914, Nr. 87.

desires still existed. Indeed, old and new, traditional and modern still stood in tension with one another. In perhaps the most revealing anecdote about the gradual shift from old to new, Arthur Brehmer described the way guests at a very traditional and proper wedding ball noticed how, as things were winding down, other guests started to arrive for an entirely different sort of ball. The wedding guests were intrigued by the colorful clientele this other ball attracted, and while they first merely observed their bawdy merriment, they soon lost their inhibitions and joined in to the can-caning and dancing and general felicity.[106] In the clash between old and new, Berliners increasingly found the modern, practical, and individualistic approach more appealing.

Casual Dating and the *Verhältnis*

If we leave behind balls for a moment, we can observe this same friction between old and new with regard to love and intimate relationships, more generally. A 1912 novel by Leo Leipziger, for example, which the Berlin press reviewed as perhaps the best portrayal of the true nature of Berlin life, took the conflict between "back then" and "nowadays" as its pervasive and structuring theme.[107] The book's title, *Der Rettungsball* (*The Rescue Ball*), refers to the beach-ball-shaped life preserver one threw to Berliners who had fallen (or jumped) into the Spree River or the city canal. In this case, the drowning Berliner is the young stockbroker, Max, who is the very symbol of modern, energetic, self-confident, and reckless Berlin of the twentieth century. Max has namely speculated on American railroad stocks and lost big, and his only hope (his *Rettungsball*, as it were) is his wealthy spinster aunt, Ida Susemaus, who stands for stability, caution, and tradition – in a word, "old Berlin."[108] Indeed, Leipziger gives the reader ample clues

[106] Arthur Brehmer, "Aus dem dunklen Berlin: Allerlei Bälle," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 February 1899, Nr. 33.

[107] Alfred Holzbock, "Ein Berliner Roman," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 September 1912, Nr. 453.

[108] Leo Leipziger, *Der Rettungsball* (Berlin: Roland von Berlin, 1912), 22.

to highlight Ida as a stand-in for the Berlin of yesteryear, Berlin before it became the bustling metropolis that featured so heavily in Chapter One. Ida lives not in the upstart neighborhoods of Berlin W. or the well-to-do suburbs of Charlottenburg or Schöneberg but rather on Fischerstrasse, which *was* Berlin in the centuries preceding the city's explosion onto the world stage at the end of the nineteenth century. This house, Ida's birth house, which "would hardly cut a fine figure in [Berlin's] trendy Bavarian Quarter," is, the narrator tells us, "the last remnant of old Berlin."[109] Ida has, characteristically, never moved, and she continues to run the family vegetable wholesaling business from this old home filled with *Biedermeier* furniture and various other remnants of the past, including an old oil portrait of Ida's parents done by a painter "who was all the rage thirty years ago."[110] Ida, we are told, "came into the world in this house, and in this house she will breathe her last breath."[111]

Max – in case we needed any further evidence of the old/new dichotomy of the novel – is very different from his aunt, for he goes from "flower to flower" – job to job, woman to woman – and this is the complicating factor for his rescue. Indeed, Ida's single stipulation about helping Max is that he give up his casual relationship, his *Verhältnis*, with his girlfriend, Meta, and marry a respectable girl (of her choosing).[112] The plot progresses rather predictably, with Max first ditching Meta and then ultimately benefitting from the labors of his friend, Moritz, who smoothes things over with Ida and procures her blessing for Max to marry Meta (who does her

[109] Ibid., 21-22.

[110] Ibid., 26.

[111] Ibid., 22-23.

[112] Ibid., 24.

own part by proving to Ida that she is a respectable, independent, hardworking businesswoman, not unlike Ida).

But it is not so much the plot of *Der Rettungsball* we are interested in here; much more, it is the conflict between old and new, between traditional (Ida) and modern (Max), and the newfangled approach to love (Max's *Verhältnis*, his casual girlfriend, Meta) that serves as its catalyst. Indeed, the *Verhältnis* crystalized modern, practical, and individualistic ways of thinking about love and relationships at the turn of the century. Casual dating was by no means new in 1900, and probably did not start in Berlin. For that matter, whether it was concubinage in the ancient world or "hook-ups" in our contemporary society, loosely-defined, on-again-off-again relationships with little prospect or likelihood of marriage have undoubtedly always existed in some form or another. But as debates about relationships, dating, and marriage crescendoed at the turn of the century (the topic of Chapter Three), the notion of the *Verhältnis* became especially controversial. In part, this was because – as so many critics claimed – nearly every man had a *Verhältnis*. By some accounts, most women had them, too.[113] Dorothee Goebeler even quipped that, "nowadays, even school girls have a *Verhältnis*."[114] Frieda Kliem had one, though it is perhaps more accurate to think of Frieda as, herself, the *Verhältnis* to Otto Mewes, the quirky older man she tried to pass off as her uncle. After all, he seemed to dominate the relationship and, in fact, came and went as he pleased. Either way, it is clear that a person's feelings about the propriety of a casual dating relationship with no immediate intentions for marriage broke down along the old/new, traditional/modern divide. A young, working-class woman who did not believe that an upstanding girl could tolerate such a relationship wrote that

[113] "Öffentliche Meinung: Moderne Anschauungen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 August 1905, Nr. 382.

[114] Dorothee Goebeler, "Was ist der Frau erlaubt, wenn sie liebt?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 24 August 1907, Nr. 429.

her friends derided her as "unmodern," just as a bachelor recalled how, when he refused to marry a girl of (in his eyes) questionable morals, she called him old-fashioned. "Everyone can have one *Verhältnis* as long as it's just one without anyone thinking anything of it," she had said. "Am I just outdated?" the man asked his fellow Berliners.[115] Conversely, those who countenanced or even embraced casual dating nearly always described themselves as modern or referred to the reality of the world "nowadays."[116] A 1907 book called *Die Frau von heute* (*The Woman of Today*), for example, suggested that the *Verhältnis* was simply the modern, refined, freer form of the coquetry society had known for so long.[117] Dorothee Goebeler put it succinctly when she referred to the growing chasm between "mothers of yesterday and daughters of today" – mothers who would not dream of dating casually and daughters who did.[118]

Casual dating was one cause for the growing rift between old and new, traditional and modern, and this appears to have applied to young men and women of both the working and middle classes, if not the upper class, as well.[119] It often started as a result of the modern approaches we have already discussed: fortuitous encounters on the street, interactions with neighbors in apartment buildings, affection for work colleagues, and sports. The most common – and, indeed, surefire – path to casual dating, however, was without a doubt the dance floor. We

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[115] "Öffentliche Meinung: Berufsleben der Frau und Frauen-Sehnsucht!" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 October 1907, Nr. 547; "Öffentliche Meinung: Moderne Anschauung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 August 1905, Nr. 382.

[116] "Öffentliche Meinung: Moderne Anschauung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 August 1905, Nr. 395.

[117] Dorothee Goebeler, "Was ist der Frau erlaubt, wenn sie liebt?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 24 August 1907, Nr. 429.

[118] Dorothee Goebeler, "Mütter von gestern und Töchter von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 September 1907, Nr. 466.

[119] There was, for example, the case of Berta Wigger, who met a very wealthy man from Berlin's west side on a dance floor and moved in with him as his "second wife." "Eine kleine 'Madame Humbert,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 April 1908, Nr. 189.

have already discussed the centrality of balls, and dancing, more generally, was extremely popular in Berlin at the turn of the century. Edmund Edel, an influential writer, director, and artist, went as far as to assert that "Berlin is a dance-crazy city. A violin has hardly started to play and yet legs start twitching at once." "One can even say," he continued, "that a dance madness, a dance epidemic has broken out in the city."[120] Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons spent dancing the polka at a dance hall were without question the weekly highlight for working- and middle-class Berliners alike. Indeed, a popular working-class saying went "Can't wait for Sunday; no dancing, no fun."[121] "This dance frenzy is at its craziest on Saturday night," Edel wrote, when "the dance halls are so crowded that one can hardly breathe."[122] We can get a feel for the energetic atmosphere of the dance hall by following "Sylvester," a reporter for the *Berliner Morgenpost*, into a dance hall late one Saturday night in 1899:

> Down the hall to the coat-check. From somewhere the muffled sound of a waltz. The coat-check attendant stumbles up to us and hangs our overcoats with the rest of them. Judging by the abundance of coats, it must be very full inside. Someone kindly pulls back the portiere hanging over the door. A sea of light hits us, a hot, stimulating air. White and gold everywhere; on the walls and ceilings are paintings; the motif of eternal femininity appears again and again in stark nude hues. A gypsy band strums a Strauss waltz with titillating verve. On the parquet there is dancing. […] Watching them, one almost understands how certain puritanical sects in America could consider the waltz immoral. It is this pressing together of bodies, the swaying of elastic bodies, the sly tricks.[123]

Whether it was the intimacy of the waltz (or the much more modern Tango, which, as one writer put it, was specially designed to bring people together in intimate ways), the tantalizing melodies of the band, or Berliners' desire to let loose after a long week of work, Saturday nights and

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[120] Edel, *Berlin tanzt!*, 77.

[121] Else Krafft, "Tanzstunden…," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 March 1908, Nr. 52.

[122] Ibid., 99.

[123] Sylvester, "Berlin bei Nacht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 February 1899, Nr. 48.

Sunday afternoons at dance halls found couples pairing off by the thousands throughout the city. For those who were up for it, this "dance floor love," as it was called, often led to real intimacy and connection.[124] Indeed, "typical" was how a news story about a 1908 murder trial referred to the fact that the murderer had met her lovers at dance halls.[125] Sometimes the connection was merely sexual, as was the case when an undercover policeman caught two individuals at the Luna Park dance hall, "Mon Plaisir," doing an "American dance" that, in characteristically chaste police language, involved "coital movements."[126] The historian Carola Lipp has also suggested that dance floor couples often slept together afterwards and frequently did so outside in the bushes after the dance was over.[127] Older Berliners even complained about the way dance floor couples brought their intimacy onto the train on the way home from the dance.[128] Other times, intimacy found on the dance floor was more lasting and even led to marriage, which – the changing nature of balls notwithstanding – was probably still the ideal outcome for many Berliners.[129] In some ways, dancing was the perfect way to find a marriage partner, especially if one bought the theory presented in the *Berliner Morgenpost* that dancing was essentially a sort of human mating call.[130] Indeed, men who were looking to get married were often told simply to go

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[124] Erdmann Gräser, "'Der Tanz erfreut des Menschen Herz…' Drei Momentbilder," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 February 1914, Nr. 31.

[125] Norbert Falk, "Zwei Frauen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 July 1908, Nr. 153.

[126] "Berichte über das Tanzlokal 'Mon Plaisir' im Lunapark (1911)," Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 30 Berlin C Titel 610, Th. 3833 Schbg. Th. Nr. 12.

[127] Lipp, "Sexualität und Heirat," 192.

[128] "Öffentliche Meinung: Sonntagsvergnügen auf der Vorortbahn," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 21 October 1900, Nr. 494.

[129] Hans Bronnert, "Die Berlinerin: Die Laden-Lady," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 December 1909, Nr. 339; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 November 1900, Nr. 518.

[130] F. S., "Der Tanz," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 22 February 1899, Nr. 45.

dancing, where they would surely find someone. This, after all, had been Helene Kuërs's first suggestion to her boss (and future husband) when he told her he wished to get married.[131] Women, especially, were eager to find a spouse on the dance floor, and swindlers, of course, soon became wise to this fact.[132] And some couples who met on the dance floor did not know exactly what would become of the relationship, as was the case for a distraught 26-year-old Berlin man who kissed his dance partner and then found himself being introduced to her parents as her fiancé.[133]

The most common outcome of dance floor love, however, was somewhere in between sex in the bushes and a promise of marriage; it was, in a word, the *Verhältnis*, the unchaperoned, unadvertised, normally undefined dating relationship that, for the most part, Berliners saw as the practical and harmless means to an intimate and less lonely end. These relationships were, indeed, often fairly fleeting, perhaps most tragicomically so when the young worker started a *Verhältnis* with a girl he met on the dance floor and then promptly fell in love with the girl's mother (or, for that matter, when a drunken police officer overzealously broke up the intimate embrace of a couple who had left the dance hall and was sitting quietly in the Tiergarten).[134] In other cases, dance floor love ended when the man stole a mirror from his girlfriend's boss, when

[131] Helene Kuërs, *Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben* (1954), Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Signatur 11581 II,2, 16; Öffentliche Meinung: Wie wird jetzt getanzt!" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 31 July 1910, Nr. 383.

[132] "Die das Lieben fliehen. Der Achtzehnjährige mit den sechs Bräuten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 January 1907, Nr. 12; "Ein gefährlicher Don Juan," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 October 1903, Nr. 242; Paul Bliß, "Unter Amors Maske," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 November 1898, Nr. 38.

[133] "Das Publikum: Ist ein Kuß eine Verlobung?" *Berliner Morgenpost*, 22 February 1903, Nr. 45.

[134] "Der junge Don Juan und Schwindler," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 June 1906, Nr. 130; "Der traurige Held eines nächtlichen Abenteuers im Thiergarten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 September 1902, Nr. 411.

he got violent, or when the girl's parents found out about her casual dating and put an end to it.[135]

Fleeting or not, these were nevertheless relationships that provided warmth and connection, and Berliners nurtured them through love letters left at the "messages" counter of the post office, where one could leave and receive messages of love. The *Berliner Morgenpost* even ran a piece in 1906 suggesting that the postal service paint a large cupid on the wall of its building since it served so many Berliners as a sort of love-courier service. The article, whose author perched himself amongst the love-sick crowds, also gives us a taste for the excitement of dating:

> It is interesting to examine their facial expressions, for they so clearly reveal the emotions of their love lives as they read the written correspondence of their beloveds. Does she (or he) smile while writing the lines with such joy – 'Are you happy, Schnucki? I am too' --; does she bite her lip nervously – 'I am starting to wonder about the meaning of your silence' --; does she longingly close her eyes half-way – 'oh, if only I were already at your place.'[136]

Often these notes set up a rendezvous at one of many Berlin hotels that were well known for the fact that their guests almost never had any luggage and checked out at midnight. "It's funny how many *Herr Meyers* there are," a piece in the *Berliner Morgenpost* quipped.[137] Other times the rendezvous spot of choice was the easily recognizable public clock (*Normaluhr*) on Potsdamer

[135] "Eine Bekanntschaft vom Tanzboden," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 January 1909, Nr. 12; "Tanzbodenliebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 October 1903, Nr. 234; "Das Publikum: Einladung auf einem Ball," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 February 1911, Nr. 36.

[136] Pipifax, "Das Liebespostamt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 August 1906, Nr. 189.

[137] "Berliner Hotels: IV. Die Hotels 'für Ehepaare.' – Die Speziel-Hotels," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 18 January 1905, Nr. 15.

Platz or Friedrichstrasse.[138] Most common, though, was probably one of the many parks – Humboldthain or the Tiergarten, for instance – which offered seclusion from prying eyes.[139] Julius Knopf, in a poetic ode to the Tiergarten published in 1905, could not keep his eyes off the many lovers in Berlin's beautiful central park:

> On a bench, hidden from the eagle eye of the policeman
> Sits a couple, hand in hand […]
> And in front of me, walking, deep in an embrace
> "She" sways with "him" in ecstasy […].[140]

The Tiergarten also served as the favorite meeting spot of gay Berliners.[141] Hans Ostwald, the writer/journalist/amateur-sociologist famous for his fifty-volume "Big City Documents" (*Großstadt-Dokumente*) that described Berlin from the bottom up, is our reliable guide here.[142] Ostwald writes about the gay men who sit, alone or in groups, near the Tiergarten's Goethe monument and wait for their boyfriends.[143] The prevalence of gays in the Tiergarten even had Berlin's chief of police worked up. In 1911, he wrote a memo to a city magistrate suggesting that lights be installed in various points of the park so as to prevent the large number of gay men who were not breaking any laws but were using the Tiergarten as a way

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[138] Dr. A. Römer, "Das Rendezvous am Potsdamer Platz. Ein heiteres Strassenbild mit ernstem Hintergrund," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 December 1902, Nr. 303; Wilhelm v. Berg, *Auf dem Standesamt*, vol. 76 of *Intime Geschichten* (Berlin: Berliner Roman-Verlag, 1905), 44; Peter Berliner, "Ferdinand's Rendezvous," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 February 1902, Nr. 28; Hans Levitus, *Von Stufe zu Stufe*, vol. 80 of *Intime Geschichten* (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 1905), 8.

[139] "Ein Abenteuer in Humboldthain," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 April 1903, Nr. 191; "Der Tiergarten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 July 1905, Nr. 164; "Tiergartenbummel," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 19 June 1904, Nr. 307.

[140] Julius Knopf, "Tiergartenbummel," *Berliner Zeitung*, 5 July 1905, Nr. 153, cited in Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 99.

[141] *Das perverse Berlin*, 71-78.

[142] On Hans Ostwald, see Fritzsche, "Vagabond in the Fugitive City"; also Ralf Thies, *Ethnograph des dunklen Berlin. Hans Ostwald und die "Großstadt-Dokumente" (1904-1908)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).

[143] Hans Ostwald, "Dunkle Winkel und Menschen," in *Berliner Nächte* (Berlin: Conrad Haber's Verlag, 1914), 2.

to find dates.[144] Of course, for gay Berliners, casual dating was frankly the only possibility for connection, and they faced not only all of the problems the big city presented in Chapter One, but also the full and binding weight of Germany's (in)famous §175 (criminalizing gay sex and in effect driving gays underground), which made finding love even harder.[145] Indeed, one of Berlin's most famous (but anonymous) gay men described in his diary how, upon his arrival in Berlin, he was cold, without money, and hungry – so hungry, in fact, that he could not sleep. When he made his first gay friend, he confessed to his diary, "I [then] realized how terribly isolated I was in this city of millions […]."[146] Another gay writer lamented the fact that his era's "closet morality" prevented Berliners – particularly gay Berliners – from finding each other.[147] Gay Berliners had, in many ways, to rely upon the fortuitous encounters we discussed in Chapter One, though the general risk of social censure was, in this case, compounded by the real penal threat of approaching someone on the street.[148] One gay Berliner described the beginnings of a relationship with a medical student who had moved to Berlin from the provinces because he wanted to take in the maelstrom of the city. But the medical student turned out to be straight, and

[144] "Benutzung der Wege und Plätze im Tiergarten und Besprengung derselben (1911)," Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 18659.

[145] A 1997 exhibit at Berlin's Schwules Museum and the Akademie der Künste suggested a similar point, noting that "for homosexuals, who, out of fear of judgment and punishment, were forced to divide their private lives, their apartments, and their circle of close friends from their same-sex desires, anonymous meeting places such as public bathrooms, green spaces in the Tiergarten, or along the city canal at Halleschen Tor offered the only possibility of making contact with other gays […]." *Goodbye to Berlin*, 73.

[146] The editor/publisher of the diary claimed to have received it from its author. This was, of course, also a popular narrative device among authors, so it may or may not be "authentic" in the strictest sense of the word. *Eine männliche Braut*, 32-33, 35.

[147] Karl Merz, "Unsre Kolonie," *Der Eigene* 9. 10. (15 March 1897): 72.

[148] "Ein Mann in Frauenkleidern," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 October 1913, Nr. 546; "Ein Siebzehnjähriger," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 24 November 1904, Nr. 276.

the author, who had nevertheless fallen in love with him, detailed his pain at lending him money for a prostitute:

> On our way home, he asked me for [3 Marks]. I gave them to him but became suddenly silent even though I had just so happily conversed with him; and a feeling of indescribable melancholy shot through my heart. We reached the street corner where we normally parted ways. He stepped off the sidewalk and I turned around. I looked back once at him with deep sadness and wild inner turmoil, but still feelings for him, whom I loved dearly despite everything. […] A heterosexual can only understand the feelings I had in doing so if he imagines that he is deeply and madly in love with a woman whom he must lay in the arms of a roué [here, an older rake with an affected interest in men] while he, having paid the man a sum of money and essentially sold her off, must stand by with a feeling of failure.[149]

A poet described a similar feeling when his lover turned his attention to women: "It's all over now. […] A woman sits atop the throne of his heart."[150] And while some people thought that gay Berliners had some mysterious talent for finding other gays on the street, others pointed out that gays had to rely on the same uncertainty, the same tentative, hopeful glance as straight Berliners did when attempting to make a street acquaintance.[151] Even the dark and typically anonymous space of the bordello was unsafe, for if a man fell in love not with one of the girls but with a fellow guest, as the writer Josef Kitir imagined in 1899, that encounter was cut short by their tablemates, who discovered and exposed them.[152]

In many cases, same-sex dating was also more fluid than heterosexual dating. Literature, especially, gave particularly frequent voice to the short, fleeting nature of gay encounters, as, for example, in the Adolf Brand short poem about a brief encounter – an ever-so brief *Verhältnis* –

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[149] Dr. phil. Max Katte, "Aus dem Leben eines Homosexuellen, Selbstbiographie," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 2, no. 1 (1900), 305-306.

[150] Peter Hamecher, "Drei bescheidene Liedchen für meinen Schatz," *Der Eigene*, Januarheft (1900), 326.

[151] Dr. Albert Moll, "Wie erkennen und verständigen sich die Homosexuellen unter einander?" *Archiv für Kriminal-Anthropologie und Kriminalistik* 9, no. 2/3 (1902): 157-160.

[152] Josef Kitir, "Eros im Bordell," *Der Eigene* 1. Juliheft (1899): 10-11.

at the Friedrichstrasse train station.[153] In another short story, two men meet on the street amidst the hustle and bustle of the city and enjoy a period (whether a week, a month, or a year is not specified) of intimacy and connection before they have to part (it is not clear why, though perhaps the unspoken, unspecified force pulling them apart is more powerful than a mundane need to return, for example, to Hamburg). "It is said there are people who only love once," the narrator begins, " – only once in a long life. Oh to love just once – and then – ? Then, if this love did not last a lifetime, -- if it was but an ecstasy of hours and days, then – what then – ?"[154]

More than anything else, what brought same-sex dating to an end (or prevented it from ever starting) was marriage – that is, heterosexual marriage. A wide variety of sources refer to the fact that most gay Berliners did end up getting married, whether because of family and social pressure or simply the need to fit in, to conform to a middle-class sexual normativity that was, not surprisingly, staunchly heterosexual. A letter published in the literary journal, *Der Eigene*, portrays the distraught confession of a young gay Berliner to his mother that, despite her wishes that he marry a respectable girl, he loves Oskar.[155] In another short story, a man commits suicide because of the pressure from his mother to marry a woman. "My mother is pushing me to marriage," he wrote in his suicide note. "I cannot admit to her that, while I can admire and honor the best of women, find them beautiful, even, I cannot love them. […] I would have to hate myself."[156] In both cases, the escape from marriage by "coming out" or committing suicide was, of course, imagined – imagined, perhaps, because, in reality, most gay Berliners donned

[153] Adolf Brand, "Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse," *Der Eigene* Aprilheft (1903), 243.

[154] Caesareon, "Es soll - - - Eine Erinnerung," *Der Eigene* Maiheft (1903), 303-307.

[155] Caesareon, "Brief an eine Mutter," *Der Eigene* Märzheft (1903): 185-188.

[156] Norbert Langner, "Echte Liebe: Skizze aus dem Leben," *Der Eigene*, 9. 10. (15 March 1897), 10.

hegemonic masculinity or femininity and married heterosexuals.[157] In 1903, a sexual science journal published a letter from a "Frau M. F." describing how she had conformed to her parents' expectations by marrying at seventeen and having children but, at the same time, fell in love with a woman and started a relationship with her (alongside her heterosexual marriage). But this woman suddenly got married, as well, and the author felt it as a giant blow to her happiness.[158] Reinhold Gerling, in one of his many guides to young men about sexuality and marriage, warned that lesbians normally marry gay men – men who, of course, still find them attractive – and he may well have been referring, among other cases, to the 1905 news story about a couple whose marriage was "ruined" by the wife's lesbian *Verhältnis*.[159] And Magnus Hirschfeld, the famous Berlin sexual scientist, founder of Berlin's first sexual science institute, and himself a closeted gay man, published a selection from his patient notes in a 1901 article asking whether gays were suited to married life. Among other case studies, Hirschfeld presented the account of a young gay man who resisted heterosexual marriage for a long time before ultimately giving in.

> I wanted to put an end to this sorry situation. Everyone my age was already married; my family and a few friends suggested I do the same. But I could not tell anyone the reason I did not want to get married. This is one of the sad parts of our fate, namely this secret, which is so deeply ingrained in us and must not be told to anyone, not even our closest relatives. I saw others happy and satisfied and wanted to be happy, too. While I had no desire for a marital union [with a woman], I did hope to find inner peace and satisfaction in it.[160]

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[157] Ludmilla von Rehren, "Sonderlicher, den Frauenliebe ist…," *Der Eigene* Aprilheft (1903): 234-236.

[158] Frau M. F., "Wie ich es sehe," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 3, no. 1 (1901): 308-312.

[159] Reinhold Gerling, *Mädchen, die man nicht heiraten soll: Warnungen und Winke* (Oranienburg: Orania, 1917); "Die Freundin der Ehefrau: eine zerrüttete Ehe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 March 1905, Nr. 67.

[160] Magnus Hirschfeld, "Sind sexuelle Zwischenstufen zur Ehe geeignet?" *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 3, no. 1 (1901), 40.

Hirschfeld also noted that it was "more common than one might think" for gays and lesbians to simply marry each other as a way of fulfilling social expectations and having a sympathetic partner in the difficult world of gay relationships.[161]

There were success stories, though. One of Hirschfeld's most interesting cases is the autobiography sent to him by a man who dressed as a woman and fell in love with a woman dressed as a man. This arrangement, as he describes it, allowed them to experience long-term connection and intimacy.[162] In another case, a woman met another's eyes on the street and found them so enthralling that she followed her for a spell. It happened that they kept running into each other, and the one woman finally approached the other and said simply that she loved her and that she hoped she would not hate her for it. The two appear to have become a couple afterward.[163] The most illustrative example comes from the autobiography of E. Krause, published in Hirschfeld's sexual science journal in 1901. It is the account of a seemingly well-off, university-educated lesbian who resisted the pressure to marry and ultimately met her life-long partner at a party on one of Berlin's suburban lakes. Her lighthearted retelling of the many suitors she had growing up (and her steadfast rejection of them) suggests that she had not come particularly close to marrying (a man) simply for the sake of middle-class respectability; any wavering, though, was quashed for good when, as she writes, she read Krafft-Ebing and felt her eyes open. "It was now clear to me that I could never marry a man."[164]

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[161] Ibid., 63.

[162] Ibid., 68.

[163] Mimosa, "Die weib-weibliche Liebe," *Das Geschlecht: Aufklärung über alle Fragen des Geschlechtslebens* 1 (1904): 3-5.

[164] E. Krause, "Die Wahrheit über mich. Selbstbiographie einer Konträrsexuellen," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 3, no. 1 (1901), 305.

The most interesting thing about E. Krause's account of her relationship is the fact that she refers to it – "intentionally," as she puts it – as her *Verhältnis*. In fact, she characterizes the relationship as both her *Verhältnis* and her "marriage" (*Ehe*), noting that, once they expressed their love for one another, "we have lived together as a married couple." She even understands the relationship in terms of a marriage: "My dear, homey little wife is a true German housewife and has complete control in our cozy home, and I work and make a living for us both as the go-getting, fun-loving husband."[165] E. Krause's choice of words here is remarkable because it suggests a blurring between casual dating and marriage and a tweaking or modernization of the meaning of marriage. At the same time, of course, it reveals the extent to which marriage itself was so utterly crucial to the stability of middle-class life that even E. Krause quite intentionally (and provocatively) casts her same-sex union as a marriage. Marriage was, as we have said, an utter impossibility for gay couples, but it is clear that many used casual dating as both a path to intimacy and connection and, sometimes, a replacement for a state-sanctioned union (as they would be forced to do for the rest of the twentieth century).

And while it is impossible to gauge the extent to which gay Berliners used the *Verhältnis* simply as a brief, sexual connection, we should point out that the *Verhältnis*, or casual dating, was not just about sex. Indeed, it had little in common with prostitution, especially insofar as the latter – at least in the case of turn-of-the-century Berlin – is best understood as primarily an

[165] Ibid., 306.

economic relationship.[166] Gay dating, as the medical student Edwin Bab told a Berlin crowd in a 1903 lecture, is often conflated with prostitution, probably because of the "occasional happenings" in bars and other places of ill repute. "But as little as one would claim to see love […] in the bar with the red lantern" (that is, in a brothel), he continued, "so little can one condemn gay love because of prostitutes and pimps."[167] While heterosexual dating was naturally nowhere near as transgressive as gay dating, we can nevertheless extend Bab's rhetoric to casual dating and the *Verhältnis* for both straight and gay Berliners alike. There were no doubt some dating relationships that had little to them other than sex, indeed, some that were one-sided in terms of a real sense of connection and intimacy; but many more were the wellspring of marriages, life-long partnerships (particularly but not exclusively so in the case of gay Berliners), or, at the very least, belonging and closeness that lasted long enough to counteract the alienating and isolating forces of modern, urban life.

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[166] In the course of my research, I looked specifically for evidence suggesting that some encounters with prostitutes in turn-of-the-century Berlin were perhaps lasting, on-again-off-again relationships – that, in other words, there was more to the relationship than a simple exchange of money for sex – but there is little of record to support such a reading. There is, on the one hand, an Arthur Roessler short story published in 1903 that features a man so lonely, so isolated in the big city that he goes to a prostitute and asks her simply to lay with him "as a sister" and comfort him. But Lelian, the protagonist, is gay, which introduces an entirely different dynamic into the prostitute/client relationship. Arthur Roessler, "Der arme Lelian," *Der Eigene* 1 (1903): 30-42. There are, on the other hand, many instances of single men in Berlin who were lonely and isolated and sought human connection via sex with a prostitute, and in that sense the encounter was, for the client, at least, about more than sex. I was unable to find any evidence, however, that suggested that prostitutes, whether male or female, themselves felt an intimate bond with their clients or derived anything other than income from them. The *Berliner Morgenpost* put it succinctly when it said of the "waitresses" in Berlin's less than reputable night cafés, "They don't sit here for their enjoyment; they sit here so that they can live." "Aus dem dunklen Berlin: Berliner Nachtcafés I," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 November 1898, Nr. 43. Hans Ostwald confirms this in his piece on the utter economic despair of Berlin prostitutes. Hans Ostwald, "Notlage oder Trieb? Eine Erwiderung," *Die Neue Zeit* 1, no. 2 (1906-1907): 74-77. Indeed, most prostitute/client encounters were short, onetime, businesslike transactions. Fritz Reinert, the twenty-something printmaker who left his hometown of Glogau and spent a year working in Berlin (and playing a lot of billiards), described his interactions with prostitutes in his diary with a clearly dismissive, unemotional air: "On the way home jabbered at by a girl, went in to the apartment, screwed for 3.50, quick amusement, left soon after, didn't really have my wits about me – Went home and to bed at 1:15 am." Fritz Reinert, *Tagebuch 1902-3*, Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Signatur 1929, 41.

[167] Edwin Bab, *Die Gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe (Lieblingsminne): Ein Wort ueber ihr Wesen und ihre Bedeutung* (Berlin: Hugo Schildberger, 1903), 52.

Casual dating, as we saw earlier, was emblematic of the new Berlin – the Berlin that, as Peter Fritzsche has described, was "a place of previously unimagined possibility";[168] the Berlin that was clothed in a so-called "Tauentzien-Style," a new way of living embraced by active and endeavoring young men and women who found themselves actively "browsing," "searching for the happiness that lies on the street."[169] Berlin, as we have suggested throughout this chapter, was becoming – however slowly and uncomfortably – something new. The columnist Dorothee Goebeler closed her discussion of modern daughters and old-fashioned mothers by concluding that "We live in a period of transition. New ideas, new ideals rise up everywhere and battle with the old ones."[170] The turn of the century was, indeed, a period of transition, and, like Max and his Meta, Frieda and her Otto, men and women were, increasingly, turning to casual dating because it offered a means to an end. For many, that end was not marriage but intimacy, closeness, and connection, though marriage remained the be-all and end-all of middle-class*ness*.

It was also a practical, individualistic end. As one Berliner put it in a reader letter to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, "every even halfway independent girl goes for walks with an upstanding man, not out of interest in him, but rather for her own enjoyment. It has nothing to do with love."[171] Much like Frieda escaped her loneliness and connected with others through modern leisure activities (in her case, bicycling), indeed, much like countless others adapted to the realities of modern metropolitan life by considering apartment and workplace relationships,

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[168] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 148.

[169] Ibid., 155; "Der Tauentzienstil," *Berliner Zeitung*, 16 November 1911, Nr. 270, quoted in Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 156.

[170] Dorothee Goebeler, "Mütter von gestern und Töchter von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 September 1907, Nr. 466.

[171] "Öffentliche Meinung: Liebeserklärung und Heiratsantrag," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 April 1908, Nr. 200.

so, too, was the increasing acceptance of casual dating a reworking of gender normativity to accommodate the changing times and environment. We might well refer to this process as the urbanization of sexuality, though there was, of course, much more at stake here than sex and intimacy.[172] Casual dating – dating that was not merely courtship for marriage, but rather itself a means of connection – may not have started in the city, and it may have predated urbanization to some degree, but it made the most sense and gained the most traction in cities like Berlin that presented problems to single people looking for intimacy and not simply a sexual encounter.

Its prevalence notwithstanding, casual dating at no time prior to World War I became generally socially acceptable, however, and those men and women who dated with no marriage in sight operated outside the bounds of hegemonic masculinity and femininity, the former admittedly much less than the latter. Men were chided for "sowing their oats," as it were, but this was done more with a wink and a nod than any intention of changing their behavior. Women, on the other hand, became disreputable when they dated casually, and this cut both ways: it did not matter whether a woman was the one dating casually or the casual date herself; critics – from mothers and grandmothers to social observers and pastors – were quick to connect dating with prostitution. These voices against women and the *Verhältnis* formed a chorus in newspapers and newsletters, and some women – in particular, a Frau Manko, who admitted to having had 10-15 *Verhältnisse* – were openly upbraided by the news editors as "blue beards" and nymphomaniacs.[173] Attempts to apply this same moral logic to men remained few and far

[172] Thanks to a lecture by Timothy Gilfoyle on early twentieth-century American sexuality for this idea.

[173] "Das Publikum: 'Braut' oder 'Verhältnis,'" *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 January 1910, Nr. 15; Dorothee Goebeler, "Mädchenstolz," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 November 1909, Nr. 774; "Öffentliche Meinung: Berufsleben der Frau und Frauen-Sehnsucht!" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 October 1907, Nr. 547; "Öffentliche Meinung: Moderne Anschauung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 August 1905, Nr. 382; "Öffentliche Meinung: Moderne Anschauung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 August 1905, Nr. 395; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 May 1904, Nr. 203. On Frau Manko, see "Frau Blaubart," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 21 October 1905, Nr. 248.

between and at best merely warned men about the financial and sexual health costs of casual dating.[174] When, in 1905, for example, a young woman asked the advice column of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* whether she should accept the marriage offer of a man who had already had several girlfriends before meeting her, the advice was simply that she could either accept him or get used to living alone. "You cannot hold a man responsible for what he did before meeting you," the columnist reasoned. "You won't find angels on earth, not even among the most noble men."[175]

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It is thus not hard to see why Frieda Kliem shrouded her dating relationship – her *Verhältnis* – with Otto Mewes in secrecy and tried, unsuccessfully, to pass him off as her uncle. Frieda longed to be (or remain) a respectable, middle-class woman, and she walked a thin line between maintaining a certain propriety and becoming, in the parlance of the day, one of the "fallen." In truth, Frieda, of course, only wanted the connection, intimacy, and stability of a mate, if not the thrill of being swept off her feet, and she was as entrepreneurial and practical about her love life as she was about her business ventures. Frieda, as we know, struck out on her own and opened her own business; but when that failed, she moved almost seamlessly to a new, different career. In both her business and intimate pursuits, Frieda was thus emblematic of the new Berlin.

The *Verhältnis* was a new, emerging, and, for many, promising path to love, but it was a direct affront to traditional, middle-class beliefs about love and intimacy (admittedly less so for

[174] Dorothee Goebeler, "Männer, die nicht heiraten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 June 1912, Nr. 282; Dr. Georg Buschan, *Vom Jüngling zum Mann: Ratschläge zur sexuellen Lebensführung* (Stuttgart: Verlag von Strecker und Schröder, 1911); A. R. H. Lehmann, *Der Junggsell vom Elternhaus bis zur Heirat* (Schöneberg-Berlin: Hans Klee Verlag, 1909); "Öffentliche Meinung: Eine 'Gewissensfrage,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 May 1902, Nr. 229;

[175] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 February 1905, Nr. 61.

working-class Berliners). Women, especially, risked social censure – indeed, their status as "better daughters," as it were – when they left the four walls of the family living room and found dates on their own. As it turned out, Frieda's adversaries later tried to paint her as a loose woman of questionable morality, and it was her *Verhältnis* with Otto Mewes that, more than anything else, provided them with the fodder they needed to impugn her character. They succeeded in this because of the tension between new and old, modern and traditional, independent daughters and "mother's (or grandmother's) way." Casual dating of the sort Frieda Kliem enjoyed or at least accepted as a temporary substitute for marriage was wildly popular and yet only barely tolerated. "Mother's way" still held plenty of sway in Berlin at the turn of the century – enough to soak up any benefit of the doubt that women like Frieda Kliem might otherwise have received.

And yet the emergence of a new, profoundly modern ethos at the turn of the century is absolutely unmistakable. It caught the eye of journalists, authors, and artists, and normal, middle- and working-class Berliners recorded it in their diaries, letters, and memoirs. More than anything else, these Berliners were making love and intimacy their own and applying the growing sense of individualism and practicality to the world of romance. The historian Beth Bailey has described famously the shift in dating "from front porch to back seat" in the 1920s and 1930s with the birth of car culture in the United States, and she notes that this emerged out of urban, working-class culture.[176] In many ways, the automobile merely gave individualism wheels and a motor to help speed it along with regard to love and intimacy, and while few Berliners – at least those of the type we are examining in this dissertation – had cars of their own and instead rode omnibuses, streetcars, and commuter trains, a sort of dating culture was nevertheless emerging in Berlin at the turn of the century. It was hardly hegemonic, but it attracted enough attention that stories of

[176] Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*. See also Langhamer, *The English in Love*.

casual dating relationships, intimacies found or forged on bicycle rides, tennis courts, and dance floors fill the historical record already from the late 1890s on. It flourished because the problems we encountered in Chapter One presented enough obstacles to love and intimacy that Berliners like Frieda Kliem decided it was worth risking their respectability for a chance at romantic connection. As Paul Kirstein observed already in 1902, the realities of the world often prevent natural fate from running its course. It may be true, he wrote, that people who have nothing to do all day can meet or connect "within the four walls" of their parents' houses. But others simply lack the time and opportunity to do so. And so "should one really find so wrong those affinities that arise in social life, that is from the repeated shopping in a store, the repeated visit to an office, etc., simply because they are not born out of the poetry of hearth and home? Should one suppress simply for that same reason an interest that comes out of joyous occasions in dances, games, and clubs, assuming his intentions are honest and trustworthy?" True poetry, he concluded, comes from real life, from "life's moments of feeling."[177]

The individualistic approaches to love and intimacy we have seen throughout this chapter are thus perhaps best interpreted as individual Berliners seizing for themselves "life's moments of feeling" and seeking warmth and connection (and, importantly, not necessarily a soul mate) in their own novel and unorthodox ways. Sometimes they found what they were looking for; other times they had to pay a price for breaking with tradition and the expectations of their families and friends. The writer Hans Fallada, in one of the most beautiful lines of literature of the twentieth century, wrote in 1932 that "Hard on the footsteps of every Sunday comes Monday, however firmly one may believe at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning that it's light-years

[177] Paul A Kirstein, "Wie sie sich kennen lernen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 October 1902, Nr. 252.

away."[178] Modern love enjoyed on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons often came at the price of being disowned or pilloried on Monday, and some Berliners, of course, found even "modern love" wanting for stability and warmth. In such cases, they were ultimately faced (as we will see in Chapter Four) with a decision of whether to embrace more radical and revolutionary methods. In others, they simply worked with (and re-worked) what they had, and we will turn in Chapter Three to the way the dynamism of this emerging individualism shaped Berlin's larger turn-of-the-century debate about the (state) institution of marriage.

[178] Hans Fallada, *Little Man What Now?*, trans. Susan Bennett (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2009), 81.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PROBLEM OF MARRIAGE

Old Maids and Wedding Rings

In 1899, Dr. Hermann Müller-Sagan, father of six, announced in parliament that there were over 54,000 "old maids" living in Berlin. This, apparently, was the result of a study he had conducted, overseen, or was at least interested in, and he was careful to point out to his fellow representatives that this figure – 54,000 – should give one pause. After all, these women were not merely aged, grey-haired ladies who might as well be ignored.[1] They were, more startlingly (and simply), all women over the age of thirty-five who had never married.[2] Müller-Sagan, it seems, was concerned about the number of unmarried women in Berlin, women who, for whatever reason (namely, as most thought at the time, because they were sexually dysfunctional and/or lesbians), could not or would not fulfill what was widely understood as their most essential and natural function, to wit, marriage.[3] There is no further record of any specific parliamentary action on this rather odd announcement by Müller-Sagan, but it is perhaps fitting that his own daughter, Ilse, who was but eleven years old at the time, would herself ultimately join the 54,000 who never married.[4]

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[1] Though this is certainly the way old maids (or *alte Jungfern*) were widely portrayed. On old maids, see Catherine Dollard, "The alte Jungfer as New Deviant: Representation, Sex, and the Single Woman in Imperial Germany," *German Studies Review* 29, no. 1 (2006): 107-126.

[2] "54000 alte Jungfern," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23 February 1899, Nr. 46.

[3] On the problem of unmarried women in Wilhelmine Germany, see Dollard, "The alte Jungfer as New Deviant"; also Dollard, *The Surplus Woman*. Dollard details the ways in which single women were understood and portrayed not only as deviant, but even as threats to the stability of the German nation.

[4] Ilse Müller, his daughter, apparently earned a doctorate and pursued a career as a chemist. The family headstone in the Berlin suburb of Lankwitz bears the names of Hermann Müller, his wife, and just one daughter (Ilse), who, one thinks, would have been buried with her spouse and/or children if there had been any. "Grabstein.Inschrift.Hermann.Mueller.jpg" via Wikimedia Commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Grabstein.Inschrift.Hermann.Mueller.jpg.

Like Ilse, Frieda Kliem was also under thirty-five when Müller-Sagen listed off the number of "old maids" in Berlin in 1899, and she, perhaps like Ilse, might have thought she would never come face to face with spinsterhood. And yet, like so many women who could not escape the problems of the big city we saw in Chapter One or for whom the modern methods of Chapter Two were either distasteful or insufficient, Frieda found herself on the outside looking in as she entered her thirties and was not married. To be sure, there were some women who liked it better that way or for whom marriage (for example, to another woman) was a legal impossibility. For Frieda, though, her lack of a husband was a burden, an instability, and an embarrassment she wished to doff as soon as possible. Until then, she decided she would wear a wedding ring (or two for good measure) so that others might simply assume she was either married or a widow.[5] And while, as we have said, marriage granted one a certain respectability and middle-class cache, Frieda's fake wedding rings served a rather practical purpose, as well. After all, and as her friend Antonie Köhler pointed out, "men are more interested in widows than old maids."[6] She also liked to be called *Frau* Kliem, as opposed to *Fräulein* Kliem, since the latter would have made clear that she was still unmarried.[7] Her landlady reported that Frieda had even signed her apartment lease as a widow and only admitted the truth much later.[8]

Frieda's behavior is frankly a little surprising given the success she found through bicycling and her embrace of a modern sensibility about love and dating. When we left off in Chapter Two, Frieda enjoyed three relationships that each could have led to marriage. For that

[5] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 5-7, 10-12, 29-31.

[6] Statement by Antonie Köhler, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 115-116.

[7] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 10, 29-31

[8] Statement by Johanna Westphal, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 12.

matter, she had an actual offer of marriage from Otto Buning, the widower father of four who worked at a branch of the Dresdner Bank. Otto was in many ways Frieda's ideal match, not least because he loved Frieda, he loved bicycling, and he made good money as a bank clerk. Indeed, Frieda had told her friends that she would only marry a *Beamte* (civil servant), and here was one proposing marriage. The issue, as we noted in Chapter Two, seems to have been the four children. Frieda, who was remarkably independent and had enjoyed little to no contact with her own family throughout the years, was anything but eager to become a mother to four young children, and she said as much to her friends and neighbors.[9] But Otto's offer was nevertheless a compelling one, and Frieda, in spite of her hesitation about marrying a man with four children, nevertheless treasured this first offer of marriage. She apparently told him that she needed to consider his proposal before coming to a decision, and while Frieda remained irresolute and spent years trying to make up her mind about the idea of marrying Otto, he, for his part, proved a patient man, and his offer was apparently still good as late as the summer of 1914. In all likelihood, Frieda spent so long contemplating Otto's proposal because she thought she might find something better (but, at the same time, did not want to give up her first – and, it seems, only – offer of marriage in case she did not).[10]

There was also Frieda's intimate relationship with Emil Freier, the stockbroker who arranged typewriter work for Frieda, came each day to retrieve finished orders and deliver new ones, helped her move between apartments, and even stored her piano and other furniture when she traveled to Monte Carlo. On his visits to her apartment, Emil often stayed for coffee; other times they went to Aschinger's café, where he treated her to a drink and a bite to eat. It is quite

[9] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 5-7, 11.

[10] Letter from Otto Buning to Frieda Kliem, 6 July 1904, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

clear that Frieda was keen on marrying Emil – a fact she told his siblings and parents – not least because she appears to have, quite tellingly, taken off the fake wedding rings whenever she was around him. "I don't remember ever seeing them," Emil later told the police. In any case, Emil was not interested in marriage, and he, in his own words, "told her that [marriage] was out of the question. I didn't have any special feelings for her to make her my wife. I did like her as a friend with whom I could converse." Frieda apparently told her friends that Emil had a lung condition that hindered him from marrying anyone, and he may, indeed, have told her as much so as not to hurt her feelings. But when, in 1907, Emil suddenly got engaged to a woman named Clara Maerker, Frieda was crushed and more or less broke off their intimate friendship. They continued to take bicycle rides together, though even these abated to the point that Emil only saw her two or three times over the last few years of her life.[11] Her interactions with the Freiers – for, in addition to Emil, Frieda was friends with his brother and two sisters – were tense after Emil's engagement (which he later broke off), and Emil's sister, Clara, remembered that the last time she saw Frieda, in June 1914, she seemed uncomfortable and mostly looked at the floor.[12]

Frieda's third option for marriage was Otto Mewes, the eccentric older gentleman Frieda was dating casually. Frieda and Mewes were quite close, and Antonie Köhler, their mutual friend, remembered that Mewes had actually thought about marrying Frieda at some point. This would have been a good match, for the two loved bicycling and traveling, and Mewes, as punctilious as he was about his finances, seemed to have plenty of money. He was, after all, more or less a man of leisure. But for all of Frieda's concern about money, her thrift and entrepreneurial nature, it was, ironically, Mewes who gave up his idea of marrying Frieda

[11] Statement by Emil Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 63-66.

[12] Statement by Clara Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 67-70.

because he did not think Frieda would make much of a housewife. "She had little interest in constant work," Antonie Köhler told police when explaining why Mewes had decided against marrying her. "She started all sorts of things but never made anything lasting from it."[13]

It is not clear whether Frieda would have wanted to marry Mewes anyway, but his rather traditional stance on the desired attributes of a suitable wife clearly did not prevent him from engaging in a wholly modern dating relationship – the *Verhältnis* – with Frieda. And this was probably as close as Frieda ever came to a real marriage of the kind she had so often spoken of to friends and family (we recall what her friends referred to as an obsession with getting married). Indeed, her relationship with Mewes was, in time, no longer a so-called *Verhältnis* but what turn-of-the-century Berliners referred to simply as "free love" (*freie Liebe*) or a "wild marriage" (*wilde Ehe*). Indeed, their intimacy went beyond Mewes treating Frieda on their bicycle outings, which was no surprise since she was so frugal. When he came to visit, Mewes simply stayed with Frieda in her apartment and even had his own "set" of things (for example, his bicycle resided at her place, as did a host of other items). Frieda found particular joy in their trips to cafés and restaurants, not least because Mewes always paid for her. They nevertheless opened a joint bank account together, and Frieda set up her will such that Mewes would receive everything she owned (which, tragically, would happen sooner rather than later).[14] Perhaps most telling of all was the portrait of Mewes sitting on Frieda's piano – something Emil Freier's brother noticed when visiting her (Frieda claimed it was her uncle).[15] Still, Mewes eventually moved south for

[13] Statement by Antonie Köhler, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 110-113.

[14] Letter from Otto Mewes to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[15] Statement by Paul Freier, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 80-81.

good, and Frieda found herself approaching her fortieth birthday wearing fake wedding rings and worrying about becoming an old maid.

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For all of the success that Frieda found through modern methods and a modern, individualistic mindset about love and intimacy (as we saw in Chapter Two), she had remarkably little success turning any one of these relationships into that time-honored and clearly much-desired institution of middle-class respectability: marriage. Frieda quite obviously wanted to get married, and while she found both fast friends and some degree of connection with potential mates, marriage remained for her an elusive, unreachable point on the horizon. As in each of the previous two chapters, Frieda was, in this sense, only one of many women facing similarly bleak outlooks regarding marriage, "free love," and spinsterhood. Novels, short stories, newspaper articles, guidebooks, and diaries all register the problem of marriage in turn-of-the-century Berlin. The problem – a crisis, even – revolved around the same old/new, traditional/modern conflict we witnessed in Chapter Two, though, in this case, practical sensibilities about love threatened to overturn more than just the established system of courting or of proper ways to meet; much more, they called into question the very institution of marriage, and since so many families, social structures, and hegemonies had so much invested in marriage, the debate was, not surprisingly, robust. As we will see, emerging masculinities and femininities offered alternative visions of intimacy (lasting or not) in the modern metropolis, and Berliners, far from looking to the state or the church for guidance, engaged with questions of tradition, respectability, and individualism on the most intimate level.

Modern Women and the *Frauenbewegung*

In the fall of 1906, readers of the *Berliner Morgenpost* were engaged in a hot debate. It was hardly the first such heated debate in the reader letters sections of Berlin newspapers; in fact, ever since the start of the new century, Berliners seem to have relished more than ever their once-weekly opportunity to trade blows with each other on matters ranging from whether women's hats were too large and obstructed people's views in the theater and omnibus to whether men should be allowed to smoke in the streetcar. In most cases, battle lines were drawn according to gender, which was a symptom of an uptick in public-sphere antagonism between men and women. Up for debate in September 1906 was "Frau or Fräulein" (Ms. or Miss), that is, the question of whether unmarried women should be addressed as *Fräulein*, which was the diminutive of *Frau*, or if one might extend the more generic term for a woman, *Frau* (simply the counterpart to *Herr*), to women who were quite clearly no longer teenagers but deserved to be respected as equal women in their own right. Opinions differed among the respondents, one pointing out that no "upstanding woman without a child wants […] to be called *Frau*," another asserting that one should take a cue from the Russians, who use simply the first and last name ("The Russians, who have done it this way since the birth of humanity, are far ahead of us"), and still a different woman reasoning that while it would take a federal law to change Berliners' habits, *Fräulein* was demeaning because it suggested that women who had not married by the normal age were somehow lesser women. The editors of the *Berliner Morgenpost*, for their part, weighed in by agreeing that *Fräulein* was clumsy but that, from a legal or civil rights perspective, neither title carried with it any special privileges.[16]

[16] "Das Publikum: Frau oder Fräulein," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 September 1906, Nr. 229.

The editors, naturally, had the final say, and their measured and practical response was a rather dull way to end such an interesting debate. But the discussion about *Frau* or *Fräulein* is emblematic of the many impassioned exchanges between Berliners at the turn of the century. More often than not, what got their blood boiling and tempers flaring were the everyday ramifications of an emerging and increasingly popular (or at least prominent) emancipated femininity born out of the budding women's movement. Individual women throughout Europe had, of course, been pushing for greater recognition and equality in the eyes of both society and the law for some time before the turn of the century, and they had, in fact, made significant strides with regard to education and employment.[17] Still, the turn of the century marked an explosion of the topic of women's emancipation onto center stage, and one of the most remarkable things about newspapers and public discourse, more generally, is how vibrant and contentious Berlin's gender dynamics were. Far from a sort of parlor banter limited to intellectual elites or prominent leaders of the women's movement (and their vocal opponents), this was a debate writ large across all segments of metropolitan society. It crossed dinner tables, filled living rooms, echoed through office corridors, and buzzed through streetcars and omnibuses, and whatever matters Berliners could not resolve in these places they continued in the pages of the daily newspapers. Indeed, hardly a week went by where there was not a provocative column or lively reader letters section about gender normativities.

Fluctuating gender roles were, as we have said, the touchstone for these debates, and most issues revolved around "modern" women and the way they appeared to be approaching love and marriage differently than their mothers had, perhaps most notably insofar as they were

[17] For an excellent overview of the gains of early feminist movements in Germany, see Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

choosing to pursue not marriage but careers.[18] "Modern life has, as we all know, freed the young woman from all boundaries and chains," journalist Dorothee Goebeler wrote in 1914, and "relationships between girls and men are different than they always were."[19] At the very least, things seemed different, and what had changed, in short, was that "The girl of today no longer waits for 'the man,' at least not in the way that our mothers and grandmothers did." Nowadays, Goebeler continued, a woman has her career. "If a 'prince' comes to deliver her [from having to work], all the better; if he doesn't come – one comes to accept that, as well."[20] Goebeler, whose columns appeared almost weekly on the front page of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, defended this shift, pointing out that work "brings [modern women] into contact with the most distant circles" of people and "protects against the embittered calcification of the spinsterhood of earlier days." After all (and as we saw in Chapter Two), this "comradeship," as Goebeler described it, between (middle-class) working women and their male colleagues resulted in a new "tone" that "no longer weighed each word on a scale and asked of each glance: what did he mean by that?"[21]

This shift, of course, represented a dramatic change from the passive, pining women who, most famously, filled nineteenth-century (and earlier) literature but without a doubt existed in real life, as well. By the turn of the century, these were, in Goebeler's words, "dying breeds of women," women from "forever ago" who, "nowadays," were being replaced by women who had

[18] On women choosing careers over marriage, see Bärbel Kuhn, *Familienstand: ledig. Ehelose Frauen und Männer im Bürgertum (1850-1914)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000). Also Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Christoph Sachße, *Mütterlichkeit als Beruf: Sozialarbeit, Sozialreform und Frauenbewegung, 1871-1929* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).

[19] Dorothee Goebeler, "Wie Mädchen altern," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 April 1914, Nr. 211.

[20] Dorothee Goebeler, "Aussterbende Frauentypen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 November 1906, Nr. 565.

[21] Dorothee Goebeler, "Wie Mädchen altern," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 April 1914, Nr. 211.

career prospects and who perhaps embraced casual dating of the sort we saw in Chapter Two.[22] Admittedly, dating probably only actually replaced marriage completely for a select few women; but the prominence of independent women no doubt led many younger Berliners to wonder, increasingly, if they could be friends with men without having to think of marriage. More generally, they began to fantasize that there was more to life than marriage.[23] "The thought of a husband and marriage is no longer the central focus of all of life's emotions," Heinz Tovote observed in 1909. "There is so much more, so much that is equally interesting." Indeed, "nowadays" a woman can talk openly about her love life and her happiness "without thinking of herself as wanton" or unfeminine. After all, "women are moving into everything, and they stand expectantly before all of life's closed doors, seeking entry."[24] This rang especially true for women like Frieda Kliem – women who were getting on in age and who previously would have become "aunts" – that is, women who retired to a life of spinsterhood and looking after their siblings' children when a babysitter was needed. One used to laugh at these "older girls" when they expressed a desire to do anything remotely feminine or flirtatious such as dancing or ice-skating. But no longer: "the older girl," who, as Goebeler put it, is "simply a mature woman," "nowadays dances, does gymnastics, swims, rides a bicycle, and no one bats an eye. She can even wear white […]."[25]

Modern women – especially older, more experienced women – were also increasingly active in pursuing men and starting, managing, and even ending relationships, a fact that,

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[22] Dorothee Goebeler, "Aussterbende Frauentypen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 November 1906, Nr. 565.

[23] Dorothee Goebeler, "Mütter von gestern und Töchter von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 September 1907, Nr. 466.

[24] Heinz Tovote, "Die Berlinerin: Mädchen aus Berlin W.," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 December 1909, Nr. 339.

[25] Dorothee Goebeler, "Aussterbende Frauentypen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 November 1906, Nr. 565.

Figure 3.1: One of the first cigarette ads featuring a woman, 1914.

(Source: *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 July 1914, Nr. 201.)

according to Clara Blüthgen, was most apparent in the big city.[26] An older girl could go to bars, as so many women were doing;[27] she could even smoke, which, as much as images of women smoking in the 1920s might have us believe this was common, was only just emerging at the turn of the century. Hans Ostwald, who made it his life's mission to chronicle the lives of Berlin's working-class and underworld, confirmed that these changes echoed in the lives of working women, as well, noting that they were more interested than ever in the "attractions of life." And yet this was far from a sort of hedonistic, decadent self-indulgence. Berlin's working women read constantly ("there is no such thing as the Berliner who sits in the streetcar or electric or other form of public transit and does not read!") and even took in lectures and presentations in

[26] Clara Blüthgen, "Werbende Frauen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 April 1914, Nr. 173.

[27] R. C., "Hat Berlin ein Klubleben?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 April 1903, Nr. 179.

the evenings. "All of these various opportunities for enjoyment call to her: 'Come – enjoy your youth! One only lives for a short time!'"[28] Others also noted the increasing popularity of women as "intellectuals," indeed, how being smart became a sort of trump card, something fashionable.[29]

Of course, being smart or having an "inner life" was not just for show, even if it was attractive; women were also given greater (though limited) marriage and divorce rights with the passage of a new civil code (the so-called *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, or BGB) in 1900, and, as Dorothee Goebeler pointed out in 1913, they were finally speaking up and asserting their rights if they were not happy.[30] Indeed, newspaper advice columns were filled with women asking for practical advice on how to divorce their husbands.[31]

All in all, as one columnist remarked, "female bachelorhood" now lasted two or three times as long as it had in grandmother's time,[32] and statisticians found their efforts to calculate the number of old maids thwarted since Berliners were marrying later and often more than once. "At what age does an unmarried woman actually give up her hopes for marriage?" asked one frustrated statistician.[33]

Of course, love – true love – complicated things, though, and modern women found themselves confronting the problem of marriage and reconciling the desire for a respectable

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[28] Hans Ostwald, "Die Berlinerin: Die Arbeiterin," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 December 1909, Nr. 339.

[29] Dorothee Goebeler, "Die Frau mit dem Innenleben," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 July 1914, Nr. 380.

[30] Dorothee Goebeler, "Die Frau die nichts zu sagen hat," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 December 1913, Nr. 627.

[31] For example, "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 January 1904, Nr. 27.

[32] "Das Heiratsalter moderner Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 January 1902, Nr. 26.

[33] G. Wolft, "Wann die Leute heiraten: Statistische Plauderei," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 September 1905, Nr. 434.

union with someone they loved and maintaining the independence (or the allure thereof) they were just beginning to enjoy. Indeed, the improvements of the new civil code notwithstanding, women recognized that while marriage – even marriage based on real affection – remained in many ways the supreme marker of middle-class respectability (one that would set them right in the eyes of their families and friends), it also often meant an end to the independence they were finally tasting as they went to bars, smoked Manoli cigarettes, and attended lectures. These, of course, were the complexities of emancipation, and one had yet again to decide for herself whether breaking with tradition, not to mention family expectations, was worth the risk and potential freedom.

This was no doubt one reason that women in general found themselves marrying later, as a front-page piece on "the marriage age of modern girls" in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* announced.[34] "Modern girls" took independent women like Henrik Ibsen's Nora and Karin Michaelis's Elsie Lindner as their inspiration for putting off marriage for a while or altogether, and novelists and feuilletonists in turn wove similar women into their stories of everyday life in Berlin. In a skit by A. von Wartenberg, for example, the recently married Helene desperately envies her friend, Bertha, who still has her independence and time for amusements. "No, she would never marry, never, ever," Bertha thinks to herself after witnessing the marital discord and resulting bitter disappointment of Helene firsthand.[35] One writer even admitted that he and his colleagues had been forced to adjust one of their oft-used "types" or set characters – the young woman from Berlin's west side whose unwavering path to early marriage was never in doubt – to

[34] "Das Heiratsalter moderner Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 January 1902, Nr. 26.

[35] A. von Wartenberg, "Der Trost," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 December 1903, Nr. 303.

reflect this new independence.[36] Other times, as in Julie Jolowicz's 1907 short story, "Zwei Briefe" ("Two Letters"), we see modern women who tell their suitors – in this case, Paul, whom the emancipated protagonist has made wait for two years while she traveled the world and tested his love and commitment – that they have become different women (women who smoke, think for themselves, and make their own decisions) and that they love "another" – namely their newfound freedom – and will not be coming back.[37] In Gertrud Steinbach's short story, "Liebe" ("Love"), a young couple sits together on the shore of one of Berlin's lakes, but the female protagonist cannot shake the longing for independence and, breaking her lover's embrace, runs toward the setting sun and expansive, freely flowing water.[38]

Delaying marriage out of a reluctance to give up independence and freedom clearly required some measure of money and was thus mostly limited to middle- and upper-class women.[39] To be sure, even working women – much like the New Yorkers in Kathy Peiss's excellent book, *Cheap Amusements* – found that disposable income opened a world of diversion in which they were active consumers;[40] but, as we saw again and again in Chapter One, the material pressures of modern, urban life frankly put a different, more pragmatic spin on the idea of putting off marriage.[41] In this way, the famous "struggle for existence" was, itself, as much of a cause for women marrying later as were the amusements and freedoms of independent life.

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[36] Heinz Tovote, "Die Berlinerin: Mädchen aus Berlin W.," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 December 1909, Nr. 339.

[37] Julie Jolowicz, "Zwei Briefe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 September 1907, Nr. 210.

[38] Gertrud Steinbach, "Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 September 1906, Nr. 207.

[39] Q, "Moderne Frauenideale: Emancipation und Mutterschaft," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23 July 1905, Nr. 171.

[40] Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*.

[41] On the marital aspirations and calculations of single women in interwar England, see Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially 217-223.

Columnist upon columnist noted how times were tighter than ever (rising food costs – especially meat – were a constant concern) and that "the question of money" had become the pivot point in the lives of all but the very wealthy.[42] There were, of course, quite a few members of the women's movement who articulated the point that marriage was a patriarchal institution designed to subjugate women.[43] But since only a minority of women gave up the idea of marriage altogether (in favor of casual dating or a life of independence, for example) and most were, in fact, still focused on the idea of (an eventual) marriage, the money issue had the ironic effect of pushing back marriage and making women consider establishing themselves financially before saying "I do." On some level, the security of at least a small amount of savings left modern women in a better position to look for a real amorous match and not simply accept "the first best," as the well-worn phrase went.[44] On a different level, however, the "struggle for existence" simply left Berliners, especially women, more skeptical about the true aims of potential husbands – so much so that Rudolf Lothar considered a straightforward, one might say traditional love story (where two people express their love for one another and then end up in love's embrace) simply a "fairy tale" best started with the phrase "once upon a time…."[45] Indeed, Lothar and others noted elsewhere that "the golden time when grandfather took grandmother is unfortunately lost and gone forever." Put differently, the time of one "los[ing] his head is long past," "turned on its head by our modern time," and it would be impossible to go

[42] "Das Heiratsalter moderner Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 January 1902, Nr. 26.

[43] Eliza Ichenaeuser, "Ehe-Ideale und Ideal-Ehen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 November 1905, Nr. 582.

[44] Mary Oberberg, "Weibliche Junggesellen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 February 1904, Nr. 75; Dorothee Goebeler, "Wenn Mädchen heiraten wollen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 February 1914, Nr. 76.

[45] Rudolf Lothar, "Eine Liebesszene," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 December 1910, Nr. 617.

back to the "romance of old."[46] Increasingly accessible jobs and career opportunities (even as civil servants) for women and, with them, the possibility of making some money for themselves, thus appealed to a great many Berlin women – women who decided to savor their small measure of new-found independence and save some money "just in case."

Still, not all turn-of-the-century Berliners were so convinced that the "romance of old" – and the idea of normal marriage at an early age – was all that bad or that changes were necessary. For one, joining the women's movement – even unofficially – and becoming one of the "emancipated" exposed one to the kind of pointed debates we have already hinted at with the "Frau oder Fräulein" discussion. "Modern" women were often scorned for their new-fangled ideas about love and marriage, and even established newspaper columnists took pot shots at such women by suggesting that emancipated women gave off a "masculine allure," what with their "short hair," reform dresses, and beliefs about free love and political equality.[47] Others confirmed that most men understood modern women and their beliefs about independence, work, and marriage as meanness or, at best, indifference to their male suitors.[48] For that matter, the very adjective "emancipated" was meant to deride and not to compliment.[49]

Whether it was because of the power of what was still a mostly hegemonic femininity (namely the "traditional" mode of mother and grandmother) or because, as Dorothee Goebeler

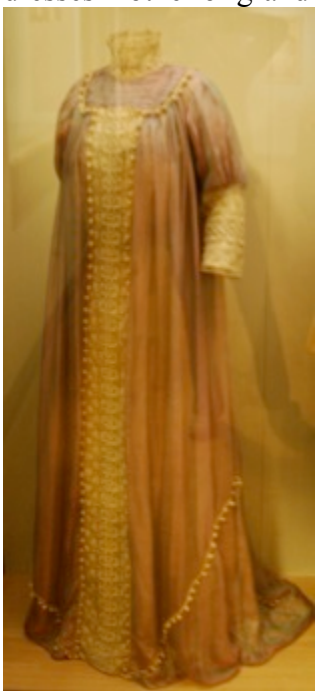
[46] Brönner, "Der Kampf um die neue Liebe," 7; Rudolf Lothar, "Liebe von heute," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 March 1908, Nr. 165; Anselm Timmler, "Schönheit und Anmut: Wie Frauen gefallen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 January 1908, Nr. 10.

[47] S. Wities, "Moderne Frauentypen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 January 1913, Nr. 33.

[48] Rudolf Lothar, "Die Mode der Unliebenswürdigkeit," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 April 1910, Nr. 176.

[49] Victor Ottmann, "Wovon die jungen Mädchen träumen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 October 1903, Nr. 501.

Figure 3.2: A turn-of-the-century "Reform" dress, which was clearly more free flowing than dresses mother or grandmother would have donned.



(Source: Author's private photograph, taken at Berlin's Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2007.)

apparently observed, many women simply were not happy trading family, hearth, and home for hard, long hours as office workers and secretaries, no few women joined the chorus of male voices against "the emancipated" and embraced marriage as they had long done.[50] Coverage and thematization of such "traditional" women often took on vaguely deterministic and clearly conservative terms (for example, suggesting that women would frankly rather have a husband than work because it matches best with their feminine traits), and one thinks the intent was to compel women to embrace traditional femininity.[51] But a variety of sources nevertheless indicate that quite a few women actively eschewed the women's movement or found the femininity it

[50] Dorothee Goebeler, "Die Frauenbewegung und die Frau," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 May 1912, Nr. 232.

[51] Ibid. Dorothee Goebeler, who, in her choice of topics and viewpoints presented, normally embraced a fairly progressive – one might say "modern" – stance, took a surprisingly conservative course in these debates. Then again, her employer, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* was, at least in comparison to the *Berliner Morgenpost* (and others, such as the *Berliner Tageblatt* or the *Berliner Zeitung*), one of Berlin's more conservative daily newspapers.

trumpeted to be tiresome and unfulfilling.[52] Alfred Holzbock even suggested that not all women were "hypermodern" and that those who were not were, for this very reason, finding success at balls and dances (and were even getting men to break with the emerging fashion of "dance aversion" and actually dance with them).[53] A. von Wartenberg perhaps put it best when he commented that the modern woman was, at the turn of the century, still more "inkling than reality."[54]

Choosing sides in the emerging debate on femininity in the modern metropolis, much less making decisions about work, dating, and marriage in real life, was, as we have seen, not an easy matter. Indeed, we see the ambiguities and complexities of emancipation quite clearly in Frieda Kliem, who was in many ways a model of emancipation – owning, as she did, her own business, refusing to marry the "first best," and embracing bicycling, which, as we will recall from a penny novel cited in Chapter Two, looked like emancipation – and yet quite clearly wanted to get married and leave at least some of this independence behind. A popular women's magazine (the turn-of-the-century German equivalent to the American *Ladies Home Journal*) held an essay contest that highlighted these tensions, as well, asking readers to submit their best responses to the question: "How do I marry off my daughter?" The responses chosen for prizes all attempted a sort of balance between work, dating, and marriage, arguing that "The choice of a career should not be an obstacle to marriage" while admitting, a breath later, that women with salaries and

[52] J. Lorm, "Frauen-Sehnsucht," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 October 1907, Nr. 521; S. Wities, "Die Frau ohne Mann," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 September 1912, Nr. 466; Dorothee Goebeler, "Mädchen, die man heiratet," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 August 1912, Nr. 440; Dorothee Goebeler, "Wenn Mädchen heiraten wollen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 February 1914, Nr. 76.

[53] Alfred Holzbock, "Mitten in der Gesellschafts-Saison," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 January 1906, Nr. 14.

[54] A. von Wartenberg, "Moderne Frauen-Typen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 January 1907, Nr. 1.

work skills held an advantage over other girls when it came to being chosen by a man for marriage.[55] The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* lauded the prize committee's selections.[56]

A serial novel by Arthur Zapp that ran from December 1903 to January 1904 offers a similar portrait of the ways "modern girls" (as the title went) sometimes struggled to match their heads and hearts in the midst of fast-paced Berlin life. "Moderne Mädchen" ("Modern Girls"), which reads like a sort of turn-of-the-century *Sex in the City*, features three young women in their early twenties – Klara, Eva, and Fritze – who share a Berlin apartment and each in her own way embodies the "modern girl" of the twentieth century. And yet each has her own opinion about what being a "modern girl" should mean, and this is what makes Zapp's story so interesting. Fritze, the youngest, is perhaps the most easily classifiable – at least at first – as she is pursuing a university education and spends her days and evenings studying for her entrance examination (on a scholarship from the Berlin women's club, no less). She is also the most jaded about marriage, men, and love, looking up from her studies and telling the other two, who discuss a mysterious man who has appeared in their lives, "Rubbish! Love is for teenagers, I have more serious things to do than fall in love. Such a thing is totally out of the question for me. You know my plans."[57]

Eva, who, like Fritze (and so many other Berliners at the turn of the century), first came to Berlin from the provinces and now works as a secretary and bookkeeper for a publicist (the first woman the publicist has ever employed, in fact), reveals her more moderate position vis-à-vis love in responding, "That's true in theory. But in practice things are always much

[55] "Unsere Preisfragen," *Die Welt der Frau* 1 (1905): 203-204.

[56] "Wie verheirate ich meine Tochter?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 April 1905, Nr. 157.

[57] Arthur Zapp, "Moderne Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 December 1903, Nr. 287, 2.

different."[58] "You are right," she continues, "we modern girls shouldn't give ourselves to a man who will require our subservience and treats us like a pet who is just there for his comfort; and we shouldn't just get married to be taken care of financially. That is shameful for a girl of today. We should all become independent and be free to pursue a career so as to avoid such an ignoble fate and make decisions independent of the material question." On the other hand, she concludes, "the best is marriage – our natural and best occupation is to be wife and mother."[59]

This last comment is greeted with hearty approval by Klara, who, despite having worked her way up from a streetcar ticket taker to a position of relative seniority as a civil servant for the transit authority, makes no secret of the fact that she longs for a husband, for children, and for love. Klara, the author tells us, has always dreamt of this – this "female happiness" – and while she takes great pride in doing a service for the state and enjoys the independence her rather sizeable salary (well over 1000 Marks per year, which is roughly three times the meager income of a woman like Frieda Kliem), she hopes more than ever that "cupid would come to her aid and rescue her from the dry office tasks that are not fulfilling to a woman."[60] Klara's financial independence is thus more useful to her in allowing her to leave behind a rather bitter family situation than in prolonging her female bachelorhood, as it were.

The actual plot of the story is not so instructive for us, though it is, of course, interesting to follow these three modern women who, each in a different way, ends up falling in love and ditching whatever reservations she had about men, love, and marriage. Such an emplotment of a story about "modern girls" thus seems on its face to fit with the relatively conservative position

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Arthur Zapp, "Moderne Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 December 1903, Nr. 288, 2.

[60] Ibid., 3.

taken by many men, some women, and a variety of social observers in deriding "the emancipateds" ("*die Emanzipierten*") as delusional, potentially even sexually dysfunctional maniacs.[61] On the other hand, if we fast-forward to the wedding ceremony of Klara, we can listen in on the wedding toast of Fritze's (the young student who claimed she had no time for love) new husband as he raises a glass to modern women everywhere:

> My toast is to modern girls, the eager-to-work, energetic, independent, modern girls. I may not be any friend of the efforts of those women's rights activists who work to open all careers without exception to women and who want to make women equal to men in every respect. But I recognize and laud one positive effect of the modern women's movement, to wit, that it has created the opportunity for modern girls to be able to earn an adequate wage in honorable […] careers. […] The independent young woman who takes care of herself does not need to sell herself to a man she doesn't love out of fear of scarcity. She can wait until her heart speaks […]. […] So I raise my glass and declare: to the modern girls!"[62]

This is where the story ends, but we can assume that neither Fritze, Eva, nor Klara felt compelled to stitch a speech so qualified and guarded in its acceptance of the women's movement onto a pillow to cherish forevermore. Still, we must not forget the atmosphere of the turn of the century, which was filled with acrimony and rather public squabbles between women pushing for independence and a majority of men who aimed to stop them (indeed, women found themselves arguing with fellow newspaper readers the point of whether a working woman was even capable of loving a man).[63] With this in mind, the limited concessions of Fritze's husband vis-à-vis the women's movement sound somewhat less misogynistic.

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[61] Dollard, "The alte Jungfer as New Deviant."

[62] Arthur Zapp, "Moderne Mädchen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 January 1904, Nr. 11, 3.

[63] "Öffentliche Meinung: 'Die Liebe des Mannes eine Episode?'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 15 January 1909, Nr. 26.

Modern Men, Fear of Marriage, and the Appeal of the Bachelor Life

A wedding toast like that of Fritze's husband might even be read as relatively progressive if we look more closely at a trend among men that was emerging alongside the budding women's movement and its many practical iterations (thematized so effectively in Zapp's serial novel): a widespread and general aversion to marriage, or *Ehescheu*, as it became so widely known in Berlin at the turn of the century. A few anecdotes from the daily newspaper will give us a taste of what *Ehescheu* looked like in a city that featured, as one newspaper article put it, an entire "marriage-averse generation."[64] In one case, a man who tried to commit suicide by jumping into a lake but was pulled kicking and screaming out of the water later admitted that he was about to get married and had attempted suicide "out of a fear of marriage."[65] In another, a man vanished on the day of his appointment at city hall and then, after a new date was set and he actually was married to the daughter of a businessman, made a break for it at the wedding reception and left the country.[66] Still another example involves the reporter who, for the love of a good story, divorced his wife so that he could marry her again, take a honeymoon trip to Paris in an automobile, and document the whole episode, day by day, for the readers of the *Berliner Morgenpost*. On the day of his re-marriage, the reporter was gripped with fear as he got out of the taxi in front of town hall and had to summon his courage: "As we got out, the devil knows why, my heart started pounding. As we started up the stairs it was still going. And I had to think very intentionally on the old phrase: 'To marry, one has to know what he's getting into but keep

[64] "Von mutigen Männern und Frauen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 June 1906, Nr. 281.

[65] "Aus Furcht vor der Ehe ins Wasser gesprungen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 August 1913, Nr. 429.

[66] "Eine Artistenhochzeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 18 February 1899, Nr. 42.

courage.' And I wanted to have courage […]."[67] Better yet, when a young groom somehow escaped the wedding coach that was carrying him to his wedding ceremony in April 1901 and could not be found, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* announced an essay contest for readers to come up with their best guesses about where he could have gone. The response was overwhelming, and Berliners were, in fact, so taken with the story that they apparently even submitted hefty novels imagining the disappearing groom's entire life story.[68]

Of course, not every case of wedding cold feet was so sensational as to occasion a city-wide essay contest; but the topic of *Ehescheu* – and the trend of men preferring eternal (or longer lasting) bachelorhood to marriage – had everyone talking in Berlin, especially towards the end of the nineteen-aughts. On some level, this was just good copy, a fun topic that, as we have seen before, further bolstered the standard narrative of the city (and of the modern world, more generally). At the same time, however, we must resist the temptation of dismissing this talk of *Ehescheu* as fluff, for the topic appears to have permeated Berlin in quite significant ways. There were naturally stories about "famous bachelors" in history, jokes about how bachelors were terrible cooks and had to rely on their landladies for anything resembling sustenance ("When bachelors cook," the headline read), and warnings to men that it was easy to get tricked into an engagement on Christmas eve.[69] But there were also books that discussed strategies for avoiding marriage or, when the wedding bells seemed ready to ring at any point, making a wedding seem

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[67] Arthur Brehmer, "Meine Hochzeitsreise im Automobil," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 June 1899, Nr. 151.

[68] "Ein Reinfall," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 April 1901, Nr. 175; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 May 1901, Nr. 209; "Öffentliche Meinung: Vom verschwundenen Bräutigam," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 May 1901, Nr. 221.

[69] Albert Frick, "Berühmte Junggesellen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 April 1908, Nr. 101; Gregor, "Die Küche des Junggesellen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 August 1905, Nr. 188; W., "Wenn Junggesellen kochen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 May 1903, Nr. 107; H. N., "Weihnachtsverlobungen: Zur Warnung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23 December 1905, Nr. 301.

like an utter impossibility.[70] Men even sought advice from their fellow newspaper readers about whether or not to break off an intended marriage for a lack of compatibility, and they found friendly ears in men who responded with practical tips for how to do it gently (men who, in their own words, were speaking from practical experience).[71] And the headline writers added fuel to the growing fire of marriage-aversion by calling it "the same old story" when a young man had to move to six different apartments in order to escape his former girlfriend, who was hell-bent on marriage.[72] Even the reliable Hans Ostwald could not resist thematizing the way men often felt trapped, caught in marriage, forced into it to avoid unpleasant situations. In the case of Ostwald's fantastic "Liebe im Rausch" ("The Rush of Love"), Heinrich sits in a bar with other members of a club he belongs to, and it is the first time he has been amidst such sociability in a long time. Even though "he [becomes] utterly intoxicated by the life […] that surround[s] him," he is careful not to drink too much because he does not want to get sick, and the others turn to making fun of him as an awkward outsider. "Heinrich's blood went to his head," and, falling in a sort of spell while gazing at the lock of dark brown hair belonging to the girl sitting next to him, Heinrich offers to buy her a drink. "Without even realizing it," Heinrich gets closer and closer to the girl, their feet touch, and their heads move closer and closer together. Suddenly, Heinrich is so warm that he has to go outside for some fresh air. She follows him, and while "at first Heinrich [feels] himself refreshed, this freshness merely increase[s] the rush, the lust, the intoxication that [fills] him." In a haze, Friedrich puts his arms around the girl and they start kissing. "They [cannot] tear themselves apart," but then her brother appears and, seeing their

[70] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-05-01, Nr. U4, A. Slottko, *Unsere Heirathskandidaten* (Berlin, 1878).

[71] "Öffentliche Meinung: Am Scheideweg," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 June 1902, Nr. 299.

[72] "Es ist die alte Geschichte…Liebeständeleien," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 January 1900, Nr. 21.

intimacy, is about to pull out a knife to attack Heinrich, who is, after all, besmirching the honor of his dear sister. But the girl is quick: "We're getting married – leave him be – he's my husband now, after all." Heinrich "repeat[s] mechanically: 'We're getting married!' But that was cold, deflated, sober. That was not stammered or screamed in the frenzy of love. That was the devastating realization of a hard, bitter fate that has suddenly appeared. He was trapped."[73]

Ostwald's genius is in the juxtaposition of intoxication and sobriety, of the "rush of love" and the cold realization of an unwanted fate, and the glut of books and articles about men wanting to prolong their bachelorhood and delay marriage would lead one to believe that, for most Berliners, marriage was, indeed, a bitter sentence.[74] A closer look, however, suggests that Berliners were not simply rebelling against the idea of commitment, monogamy, or family, but were instead responding to a particular set of developments in the turn-of-the-century metropolis. There were, of course, plenty of critics suggesting that men had simply been spoiled by increasingly popular casual dating (the *Verhältnis*) and that they saw no need to get married when they could have connection and intimacy without any of the (financial) commitment.[75] These were largely the same people pushing for a so-called "bachelor tax" (*Junggesellensteuer*) proposed sometime around 1907, which would, true to its name, require some sort of yearly sum from men who were of marrying age and had not yet married.[76] One poem sent into the *Berliner*

[73] Hans Ostwald, "Liebe im Rausch," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 May 1911, Nr. 146.

[74] For example, Paul Oppermann, *Der verheiratete Junggeselle* (Mühlhausen i. Thür: Verlag von G. Danner, 1905); Leo Berthold, "Die Ehescheuen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 February 1899, Nr. 32; "Vor dem Standesamt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 July 1901, Nr. 155; Hermann Heinrich, "Furcht vor der Ehe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 December 1902, Nr. 291; Else Krafft, "Seine Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 February 1908, Nr. 50; Else Krafft, "Männer," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 July 1912, Nr. 341.

[75] Dorothee Goebeler, "Mädchenstolz," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 November 1909, Nr. 774; Dorothee Goebeler, "Männer, die nicht heiraten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 June 1912, Nr. 282.

[76] For example, Reinhold Gerling, *Junggesellen-Steuer* (Oranienburg: Orania, 1907); "Das Publikum: Junggesellensteuer," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 July 1908, Nr. 156.

Morgenpost "from one of our readers" argued that casual dating would become an expensive pleasure if such a tax were actually put in place, implying that it was because of a man's *Verhältnis* that he had little desire to marry.[77] Writers, too, imagined plots (or perhaps based them on real-life crime stories)[78] that featured men plagued by earlier (and casual) relationships, suggesting that casual dating was a real impediment to marriage even for those who actually wanted to marry at some point.[79]

For the most part, though, Berliners seemed to agree that casual dating was not the root of the emerging problem of marriage. Indeed, as one reader wrote into the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, "One must not confuse cause with effect. [A bachelor] dates casually because he is not married; rarely does he refuse marriage because he is dating."[80] Others pointed out that, seeing as there were hardly any "old bachelors" in Berlin, most men must end up marrying after all, "disproving" the claims of the many critics of single men.[81] No one disputed the fact that men seemed to be waiting longer and longer to marry, but, when challenged, a host of men spoke up about their reasoning – and it was reasoning, they said, not impulsive decisions or laziness – for putting the brakes on marriage in the modern world. Some cited the desire to pursue a career

[77] "Junggesellensteuer," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 June 1908, Nr. 150.

[78] "Das frühere Verhältnis," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 August 1903, Nr. 189.

[79] Berg, *Auf dem Standesamt*; Otto Elster, "Judiths Ehe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 October 1910, Nr. 241 (Unterhaltungs-Beilage).

[80] "Öffentliche Meinung: Männer, die man nicht heiratet," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 September 1912, Nr. 484.

[81] Gustav Kukutsch, "Die alten Junggesellen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 January 1906, Nr. 24. Newspapers published a handful of other statistical studies confirming that most men did, indeed, end up married, as, for example, in "Die Heiratslust der Männer," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 October 1907, Nr. 237; M. R., "Die Heiratslust steigt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 4 April 1909, Nr. 80.

without distractions;[82] others complained, hypocritically, about the fact that so many women had already had lovers or even been married.[83] But the single biggest problem, put simply, was money. As we saw in Chapter One, life was expensive and wages were low in the turn-of-the-century metropolis, and where many single women had to forgo the relative extravagances of Berlin's fabulous nightlife and thus miss out on at least one potential path to intimacy and marriage, it turns out that the men they might have met on dance floors or bar stools were equally concerned about their finances. Men, as the Sunday columnist for the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* observed, nowadays do not feel financially ready for marriage. They realize how much money it requires to start a life and to support not just one but two (and eventually more) people. And they see their current situation as bachelors as much easier.[84] The columnist was right: the men who defended their aversion to marriage nearly always cited the fact that they were fully aware of the way their expenditures for food, clothing, and insurance would go up if they got married. And this was not even counting the costs of amusement, luxury items, or, for that matter, the wedding itself.[85] The *Berliner Morgenpost* hit the nail on the head with a 1913 piece about the bridal carriage as the bane of a man's (new married) existence. In this case, the protagonist, Gustav Blümke, tells his bride-to-be that, what with the rising cost of food and the expensive new apartment, they will have to do without a fancy bridal carriage and instead take a taxi to the church, thereby saving the 30 Marks for their household budget. But Kläre responds

[82] "Das Publikum: Männliche Ehescheu und weibliche Berufsarbeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 July 1912, Nr. 191. See also Kuhn, *Familienstand: ledig*.

[83] For example, "Briefkasten: Eros 777," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 May 1904, Nr. 203. Writers, for their part, lampooned men for their concern about the amorous pasts of their potential brides. For example, Alfred Fiedler, "Der Andere," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 13 May 1909, Nr. 116. And women complained that they could not shake the stain of being divorcés. "Das Publikum: Eine geschiedene Frau," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 November 1908, Nr. 264.

[84] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 November 1902, Nr. 515.

[85] "Das Publikum: Der Weg zur Ehe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 20 August 1911, Nr. 228; "Das Publikum: Folgsame Töchter," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 August 1910, Nr. 235.

"categorically" that a bridal carriage, not to mention a top hat and patent-leather boots for him, are all "just part of the way things are done. No bridal carriage, no wedding." Frustrated, Gustav tells Kläre to just get the bridal carriage, and she ends up picking a very extravagant one complete with green silk that was a little shabby already ("but this looked classier"). The wedding continues as planned, but Gustav is so angry that he cannot enjoy it and instead considers it a "source of bitterness" that he carries into the marriage.[86]

Small sketches like that of Gustav Blümke did little to ease the trepidation many Berlin men had about getting married (nor, for that matter, did the willingness of retailers to sell newlyweds entire furniture sets and all of the fixtures of home on credit make much of a difference),[87] and the result, as the "Berlin Observer" noted in his weekly column, was that men increasingly looked for a woman who already had money so that the impact of their wives' expensive tastes would be easier to absorb.[88] The idea was simple: by combining the savings of a bachelor and a "wealthy daughter," as such brides were so often called, neither bride nor groom would have to adjust the standard of living they as a couple could enjoy moving forward.[89] They would be able to "afford everything," as one woman put it.[90] Of course, a sizeable dowry also helped, and while men were frequently criticized for even still caring about the dowry, they

[86] J. Ka., "Die Brautkutsche: Leiden eines Berliner Bräutigams," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 January 1913, Nr. 24.

[87] K., "Heiratskandidaten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 20 April 1901, Nr. 92.

[88] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 September 1903, Nr. 417.

[89] Dagobert von Gerhardt-Amyntor, "Die modern Ehescheu," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 November 1908, Nr. 571.

[90] Lotte Gubalke, "Im Nebenberuf – Ehefrau," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 September 1912, Nr. 475.

defended it as entirely reasonable given the costs of modern life.[91] More often than not, though, dowries were refused or simply non-existent (after all, many young Berlin women had come from the provinces seeking work), and men were left to weigh the emotional pros and financial cons of marriage.[92] Indeed, as J. Lorm suggested in a column responding to an earlier article that sought to read the economic health of the nation in marriage statistics, men had to reach the point of satiation where "the effects of a 'temperately enjoyed youth' make peace, quite, and healthy husband food appear desirable."[93] They also had to work through the dollars and cents (that is, Marks and Pfennigs) of their budgets and decide whether they had saved enough for marriage, as Dorothee Goebeler attempted to do for them in a 1913 feature piece called "What one needs to marry."[94] As Paul Kirstein noted in 1902, men who expressed a desire to get married too soon – in their twenties – were considered fools.[95]

Getting to the point where one was ready to marry, then, was for many Berliners neither easy nor something to be taken lightly. If we need further evidence of this, we need only to peek into the diary of Ernst Schwarz, a very thoughtful, often melancholic Berliner who, at twenty-four, met and fell in love with a woman, Meta Brückner, but found himself tormented by the

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[91] "Die wahre Liebe ist das nicht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 November 1904, Nr. 280; "Öffentliche Meinung: Wie sollen wir für unsere Töchter sorgen?!" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 December 1907, Nr. 649; "Ohne Geld, keine Heirat," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 September 1904, Nr. 207; Alfred Rossig, "Frauengedanken über Männererziehung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 January 1907, Nr. 32.

[92] Quite a few stories – real and imagined – played on the idea of a dowry being refused either as a test of real love or simply, out of lack of approval of the daughter's intended spouse, or simply because the family was too poor to provide one. See, for example, "Aus Liebesgram in den Tod gegangen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 August 1905, Nr. 421; "Die aufgehobene Verlobung," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 June 1899, Nr. 128; "Öffentliche Meinung: Eine Verlobungsgeschichte," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 June 1902, Nr. 263.

[93] J. Lorm, "Ehefragen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 August 1905, Nr. 395.

[94] Dorothee Goebeler, "Was man zum Heiraten braucht," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 July 1913, Nr. 331.

[95] Paul A. Kirstein, "Verlobungen. Auch eine Osterplauderei," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 March 1902, Nr. 75.

imagined financial ramifications of marrying her. Ernst was neither poor (for he became a rather successful businessman) nor miserly (in fact, he quite generously covered the rather copious costs of his sister's wedding celebration), but he was extremely cautious and, unfortunately, plagued by chronic rheumatoid arthritis. Accordingly, Ernst hardly had time for women as he was working his way into stable employment and a reasonable income, and though he and his friend met two young women at a lake in the spring of 1911, his diary entry from that evening evinces the same aversion to (early) marriage we have seen throughout this chapter: "Nice, well-to-do girls, early twenties, would actually be a good match for marriage *if we were already thinking about such things*."[96] They were not, though, and when, that winter (recall the aforementioned bachelor warnings about Christmas eve), one of the girls, Käte, started "getting her hopes up for something serious that I cannot fulfill," Ernst broke things off. "It's really too bad," he confided to his dairy on December 14, 1911; "Perhaps I met Käte a year too soon. I always have the same misfortune – or is it good fortune?"[97]

Ernst's luck, good or bad, would be tested just two months later when he met twenty-year-old Meta at an evening ball for bankers. The two hit it off, and Ernst was in suburban Köpenick, where Meta lived, already the next afternoon. They developed what Ernst called a "very close friendship" – "here […] I have learned what passion means" – and Meta was soon intent on getting married, introducing Ernst as she did to her parents and relatives, who in turn waited expectantly for Ernst to propose. Here Ernst was again cautious, though, in this case, his misgivings about marriage carried the extra weight of not wanting to leave behind his independence as a bachelor: "I am not yet mature enough for marriage, though the fact that I

[96] Emphasis added. Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Kempowski Bio-Archiv 3623/1, 14.

[97] Ibid., 17.

have it so good at home [on my own] and want for nothing certainly has something to do with it." "Meta doesn't have a penny," he reasoned with his diary, "so, given my financial situation, it would be foolish to even think seriously about marriage." So Ernst "let Meta go," which was not easy, but "apparently reason speaks louder than my heart at this point."[98] But while Ernst tried to distract himself with his work, he admitted to his diary that his thoughts were still on Meta, and when she asked to talk four weeks later, he agreed.[99] This jumpstarted their relationship anew, and while Ernst at first maintained that he "still cannot wrap my head around the idea of marrying Meta," he found himself ultimately won over by the love and affection of his "friend and comforter," Meta. "In spite of my miserable financial situation and unstable prospects for the future (career, health, money)," he wrote, "I gradually warmed up to the idea of marrying Meta."[100] It had not been an easy decision, for "I could not come to terms with the thought of a life full of anxiety about having a decent living and lasting health," but Meta's "courage and […] love" had, in the end, convinced him to "lay down my weapons" and surrender. They were engaged on Easter Sunday 1913.[101]

Things did not get immediately easier for Ernst, though, and a promised dowry (in the form of furniture) that fell through, further health and business problems, and a bout of depression threw everything into question and left Ernst wondering if he was "one of those, whom the devil chooses to make life on earth difficult and test how much a person can take. I

[98] Ibid., 19.

[99] Ibid., 20-21.

[100] Ibid., 21-22.

[101] Ibid., 23.

don't know; I only know that I am soon finished if happiness does not return soon."[102] That happiness and good fortune did return, though not after Ernst thought seriously about calling off their engagement. But Ernst's income appears to have finally increased to a satisfactory level (a new contract in early 1914 meant that he was making 420 Marks per month – "that should be enough for the beginning of a new marriage; why shouldn't I finally be happy?"), such that he decided to "put an end to everything and finally get married." Ernst and Meta were married on April 26, 1914 and appear to have enjoyed a long and happy life together. Their son titled his father's diary collection, "My father: a Berliner."[103]

Ernst was, indeed, a typical Berliner, and though he rarely referred to the modern world as such or used language like "nowadays" (as we have seen so many do), his steady aversion to marriage, financial concerns about being able to support it, and hesitance to give up his comfortable life as a bachelor follow the contours of the larger trend of *Ehescheu* at the turn of the century. There is one aspect of Ernst's life worth lingering on, however, for, despite his almost constant worry about money, he still made his way to dances and balls and suburban lakes. In that sense, Ernst's example raises an important question: if, as we have suggested, both men and women were so concerned about money and might have refrained from joining in Berlin's many leisure and nightlife offerings, how do we explain the dance craze, the masquerade balls, the streets and city squares filling with people as the sun went down? How are we to understand Ernst shrugging off his myriad concerns about career, health, and money and meeting Meta at the bankers' ball? The answer, as one Berliner remarked in a debate about marriage with other *Berliner Morgenpost* readers, had to do with class. "Only princes and

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., 28-31.

proletarians can marry young. The middle class person has to wait until he has a stable existence."[104] This, of course, was the tricky thing about middle-class marriage, for while marriage itself was one of the middle-class bedrocks for stability, Berliners like Ernst Schwarz realized that they needed to have accumulated a great deal of stability ahead of time to be able to make such a marriage possible.

Indeed, Ernst's concerns about marriage reveal perhaps more plainly than anything else the complex interplay between class and love. For the most part, *Ehescheu* was a middle-class problem, not because middle-class men like Ernst were actually poor (he was not), had an especially high number of casual girlfriends (he had maybe one or two), or lived particularly spectacular lives as bachelors (his was rather mundane); it was a middle-class problem because belonging to the *Bürgertum*, the middle class, carried a very definite set of expectations and assumptions. These in turn were the driving force behind Berliners' desire to delay or avoid marriage. We see Ernst, for example, refer to the need to secure a "decent" or "respectable" ("*anständig*") living, which naturally meant a salary large enough to support all of the fixtures of proper middle-class life. The nuptial apartment Ernst ultimately rented was a three-room apartment that was "very nicely appointed" and in a brand new building in the suburb of Tempelhof. Ernst wrote that all of this would allow them to live there "perfectly."[105] Middle-class marriage was about this perfection, about respectability, about living at a certain niveau. It also involved, as one frustrated newspaper reader wrote to her *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* interlocutors, a wife who stayed home and did not work. "How often have I heard," she wrote, "a man from 'better' [i.e., middle-class] circles say, 'Well, as long as she does not start working!'

[104] "Das Publikum: Das Heiratsalter," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 November 1908, Nr. 281.

[105] Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Kempowski Bio-Archiv 3623/1, 29.

What is that supposed to mean?"[106] It meant, of course, that providing a wholly sufficient income for the family was an important part of hegemonic middle-class masculinity and that to permit one's wife to work a white-collar job was to fall short of middle-class perfection. "[These men] constantly forget," she continued, "that they also come from simple families, that their mothers scrimped and saved so that their sons could study."[107] They forgot, in other words, that their respectability existed not in genteel breeding or profound wealth but in tuition money gathered by industrious and thrifty mothers; in sales clerk positions attained by luck; in career promotions earned thanks to the timely retirement or death of a senior salesman. Middle-class life was tenuous, and *Ehescheu*, fear of or aversion to marriage, was, strangely enough, an attempt to hold on to it.

City Hall, Church Ceremony, or Free Love: Proposals for Reform

Ehescheu had Berliners talking (indeed, the aforementioned essay contest in the women's journal was a direct response to it), as did modern women and old maids. Increasingly, Berliners believed that marriage itself was at a sort of crisis moment, what with the rising number of divorces and publicized cases of marital violence, women who complained that marriage was no longer a stable economic base, and growing opposition by women's rights advocates.[108] Rudolf Lothar put it well when he wrote that "Those who marry are happy; those who don't are happier. Those on the outside want in; those inside want out. Men are afraid of marriage but marry

[106] "Öffentliche Meinung: Die moderne Ehescheu," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 November 1908, Nr. 595. See also Dorothee Goebeler, "Versorgte Frauen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 January 1914, Nr. 50.

[107] "Öffentliche Meinung: Die moderne Ehescheu," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 November 1908, Nr. 595.

[108] Both Christa Putz and Caroline Arni have written about the ways in which German-speaking Europeans conceived of a crisis with regard to marriage, though both scholars focus primarily on the sexual science and emotional dynamics of marriage and less on the rise of individualism and its conflict with marriage. Christa Putz, *Verordnete Lust: Sexualmedizin, Psychoanalyse und die "Krise der Ehe", 1870-1930* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011), chapter 3; Caroline Arni, *Entzweiungen: Die Krise der Ehe um 1900* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004).

anyway; women all want to get married and are happy and unsatisfied when they do."[109] Berliners were, of course, perfectly able to see the connections between the contributing factors this chapter has discussed, and while some responded by complaining that young Berliners entered marriage too starry-eyed and naïve, that they needed to be more practical (and heed their tips for choosing a mate), or that it was modern-day individualism that was ruining everything, others saw in these developments a much larger and potentially devastating possibility: was the institution of marriage simply incompatible with modern, metropolitan life?[110]

Apocalyptic rhetoric, perhaps; but Berliners nevertheless filled lecture halls to discuss it. Staff at the Ethnological Museum of Berlin had to close the doors on long lines of people waiting to hear a talk by Ferdinand Freiherr von Reitzenstein in 1910. Those "lucky" to get a seat, as the newspaper reported the next day, heard a presentation on "the big, if not biggest question of today": marriage, which is "a matter of opinion – or to put a finer point on it – fashion." Reitzenstein, author of a number of millennia-spanning studies of love – *The Ancient History of Love* (1908); *Evolutionary History of Love* (1908); *Cultural History of Marriage* (1908); *Love and Marriage in European Antiquity* (1910) – and later colleague of Magnus Hirschfeld at his Institute for Sexual Science, gave listeners his take on the history of marriage "from the time where there was no such thing as marriage to us, where there is already a movement to do away with marriage in its current form."[111] Large crowds gathered again to hear Grete Meisel-Heß

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[109] Rudolf Lothar, "Moderne Eheprobleme," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 May 1911, Nr. 272.

[110] For example, Erna Heinemann-Grautoff, *Möglichkeiten der Liebe* (Berlin: Karl Curtius, 1912); E. M., "Wie man Männer fesselt: Möglichkeiten der Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10 December 1911, Nr. 339; Carry Brachvogel, "Elektrische Frauen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 21 October 1906, Nr. 247; "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 15 June 1902, Nr. 275; S. Witties, "Vorbeigelungene Ehen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 October 1912, Nr. 549; Eliza Ichenhaeuser, "Warum das Heiraten unmodern ist," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 September 1906, Nr. 458.

[111] "Die menschliche Ehe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 January 1910, Nr. 12.

discuss the pros and cons of marriage in the modern world at the Berlin *Singakademie* in 1911, though the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* reporter sent to cover the lecture was more taken by the speaker's surprising (for a women's rights activist, he said) good looks ("As she walks to the podium, one has time to behold the womanly figure, the black, low-cut sequin dress, and the open, not at all hostile face. […] Incidentally, she also has delicate arms and small hands, and instead of listening one could -- -- dammit! That's a wedding ring! – So let us listen in…") than her proposal that marriage be made easier for young people by giving them a sort of marriage bonus that they could later pay back in taxes.[112]

Reform of marriage was, indeed, a hot topic in turn-of-the-century Berlin. J. Lorm wrote that one could not open a newspaper, read a brochure, or go to the theater anymore without seeing some discussion of marriage and proposals to adapt it to the modern world.[113] For that matter, a spirit of reform pervaded the budding wedding industry itself, as a 1904 article on modern day wedding fashion observed. "Everywhere reform. There's hardly anything in life that these days hasn't been touched by some idea for reform. So naturally one hears about a 'reform of bridal fashion,' too."[114] Newspaper readers were, of course, not about to let the many ideas about marriage reform swirl about without healthy discussion, so they started their own debates in the readers' letters sections, arguing over the idea of giving each marriage a set expiration date (term marriages, in other words) and about whether or not marriage was designed to preserve gender inequality.[115]

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[112] D. A., "Für und gegen die Ehe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 November 1911, Nr. 589.

[113] J. Lorm, "Ehe-Reformen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 March 1906, Nr. 154;

[114] "Wie sich Bräute schmücken. Eine Hochzeitsmonatsplauderei," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 October 1904, Nr. 238.

[115] "Öffentliche Meinung: Ehen auf Zeit," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 October 1904, Nr. 511; "Öffentliche Meinung: Ehereform?!" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 15 October 1905, Nr. 512.

Most debate centered around one basic question and what most saw as its three possible answers: given the dynamics and predilections of the modern metropolis, which form of marriage makes the most sense – city hall formalities, traditional church ceremonies, or "free love" unions whose longevity (or lack thereof) would be of no legal or moral importance? In some ways, of course, this was actually two questions, the first hinging on the nature and jurisdiction of marriage – state or church – and the second on the viability of doing away with marriage altogether. Many Berliners felt no connection to the church and saw little point in even having a church ceremony (a ceremony that, since the introduction of civil marriage in 1875, had been more or less superfluous anyway, especially since pastors and priests were punished for marrying a couple before they had been to city hall), not least because money was tight and ceremonies could be expensive.[116] Siegbert Salter put it best in 1906 when he quipped, "It's a long way from city hall to the altar."[117] City hall marriages were thus seen by many as the more modern, practical approach, one characterized more by friendship, understanding, and equality than the tradition-laden, old-fashioned method of the father transferring ownership of his daughter to her new and often entirely foreign husband. Lizentiat Bohn, whose 1907 lecture on modern approaches to marriage received a lot of praise, told listeners that "Those who are just married at city hall but have love and loyalty in their marriage are ethically superior to those who marry in a church with all sorts of pomp but have no idea of the true nature of marriage."[118] On the other hand, quite a few Berliners still believed in having the sacrament of marriage

[116] On the decline of religiosity in turn-of-the-century Berlin, see McLeod, *Piety and Poverty*; also Tyler Carrington, "Instilling the 'Manly' Faith: Protestant Masculinity and the German *Jünglingsvereine* at the *fin de siècle*," *Journal of Men, Masculinities, and Spiritualities* 3, no. 2 (June 2009): 142-154.

[117] Siegbert Salter, "Aus dem Standesregister einer Millionstadt: 1. Der Berliner Heiratsmarkt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2 March 1906, Nr. 51.

[118] "Standesamt, kirchliche Trauung oder freie Liebe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 23 March 1907, Nr. 150.

administered at a church. For some, it was a sentimental attachment to tradition, as, for example, in Alexander Elster's short story, "Erikas Hochzeit" ("Erika's Wedding"), where, after having the entire marriage nearly fall apart before it even begins, the couple finds a friend – who happens to be a town hall clerk – to marry them and then scrambles to the church "since the bride in her overflowing happiness did not want to miss out on the church blessing."[119] Indeed, many couples who skipped a church ceremony found themselves regretting it, as the advice column of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* warned a reader who wrote in asking to have the difference between city hall marriages and church ceremonies explained.[120]

In some ways, though, the dilemma of whether or not to have a church ceremony paled in comparison to the larger debate about whether marriage should continue to exist at all.[121] There were many who argued that marriage was simply incompatible with modern times and that free love was the only solution that made any sense. Traditional marriage was based, they said, on a fundamentally unequal morality that allowed men to satisfy their "polygamous instincts" while denying women the same opportunity.[122] Indeed, women complained that men were constantly trying to convince women that they should embrace free love even though, when choosing a marriage partner, they would never consider a woman who had already experienced intimacy.[123] This was the experience of Olga Th., who had divorced her husband and then likely felt the sting of social reproach as a divorcé looking for love. Even before the divorce had been finalized, Olga

[119] Alexander Elster, "Erikas Hochzeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 November 1907, Nr. 259.

[120] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 April 1904, Nr. 179.

[121] On alternative marital arrangements and "radical couples" in England in the late nineteenth century, see Ginger S. Frost, *Living in Sin: Cohabitating as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), especially 195-224.

[122] Rudolf Lothar, "Revolution der Ehe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 April 1908, Nr. 175.

[123] "Öffentliche Meinung: Unliebenswürdige Frauen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 26 June 1910, Nr. 318.

"felt very isolated," so when she met a businessman who proposed that they forgo "the awkward formalities at city hall" and live "the good life" in free love, Olga agreed.[124] But free love, as a number of writers suggested in short stories and novels, was about more than simple convenience or laziness. In the case of Konrad, the main character of S. Sborowitz's 1907 play, *Freie Liebe* (*Free Love*), marriage with Martha, the woman he loves, is simply out of the question given their vastly different social backgrounds. Indeed, when Konrad's father finds out about their free love union, he disowns Konrad, after which Konrad falls ill and ultimately dies, Martha's best efforts to revive him notwithstanding.[125] Hermann Heisermans's short story, "Liebschaft" ("Amour"), portrays free love relationships in a similarly tragic light, though here we see the awkward interaction of a recently deceased young man's parents and his lover, who is bereft at the loss of her free love husband but embarrassed by the scorn of his mother. Only the father, who recognizes that they lived "as man and wife," shows any compassion to the young lady before she flees the apartment.[126]

Free love advocates recognized that it was young women who suffered greatest from the taboo status of such unofficial though often quite stable relationships, so they worked to protect women by normalizing free love, proposing also that women be granted the moral freedom to enjoy "free love" as they mature from teenagers to women.[127] The Association for Maternity Rights, for example, released a resolution in 1907 calling for the "legal recognition of free marriages," their protection from interference by state authorities, and the legal equality of

[124] "Der eifersüchtige Liebhaber," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 31 August 1907, Nr. 204.

[125] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-05-02, Nr. 3826, S. Sborowitz, *Freie Liebe* (Berlin, 1907).

[126] Hermann Heisermans, "Liebschaft," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 May 1903, Nr. 103.

[127] Rudolf Lothar, "Revolution der Ehe," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 April 1908, Nr. 175.

children born out of free love unions.[128] Even Reinhold Gerling, a popular and prolific author of advice manuals for young people, got behind the idea, arguing that free love might actually lead to a strengthening of traditional marriage. Indeed, for Gerling, free love was not so much the dissolution of state- or church-sponsored marriage as it was the complete overhaul of marriage law, marriage practices, and marriage education. "We realize," he wrote in his 1907 advice book, *Freie Liebe oder bürgerliche Ehe* (*Free Love or Civil Marriage*), "that things cannot continue in the same old tracks. The new age, with its violent economic unrest, demands a restructuring of individual life."[129] As it is, civil marriage (by which Gerling simply meant normal, legal marriage) "inhibits the development of the individual" when it should ideally be about "developing two complementary people into one being without destroying their individuality."[130] Proclaiming that "love […] must be free," Gerling thus proposed that marriage laws recognize that "true marriage is made manifest in the instant that two loving souls plunge into one another, that they either silently or jubilantly give themselves to each other."[131] State and religious rules governing marriage must be abolished, Gerling concluded, for they "killed" love by constraining it, codifying it, and pushing it into an unnatural mold.[132]

Gerling's ideas were obviously radical for his time, calling as he did for the dissolution of any obstacles to divorce ("to give a promise for life, to sign a contract of indefinite length, is, given the current [social and economic norms], positively absurd!"), the end of a double morality

[128] "Bund für Mutterschutz. Ehereform, uneheliche Kinder, Säuglingssterblichkeit," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 January 1907, Nr. 12.

[129] Reinhold Gerling, *Freie Liebe oder bürgerliche Ehe* (Oranienburg: Orania, 1907), 5.

[130] Ibid., 21.

[131] Ibid., 21.

[132] Ibid., 13.

regarding virginity before marriage, the delay of dowry payments until after the first year of marriage, and the entrance of women into all careers.[133] It is hard to gauge the extent to which any efforts at reform took hold – the debate certainly continued well into the first days of World War I, and while the war did, indeed, open a variety of new careers to women; while the 1920s saw further developments in the way Berliners thought about sexuality, dowries (which, after the hyperinflation of the early 1920s, would have largely been erased), and divorce; these same changes were a frequent source of resentment, resistance, and backlash.

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Still, while Gerling, like other advocates for free love – and marriage reform, more generally – was responding to what so many saw as a crisis of marriage, a failure of the church and the state to fit that time-honored institution to the pace and desires of modern life (indeed, Gerling claimed a pastor told him to leave marriage reform be; "no reform from the outside. It will change with time if God wills it"), it seems that the "problem of marriage" was, more than anything else, about the central conflict of this larger story of love in the modern *Großstadt*, namely the tensions between the patterns of traditional, middle-class life and an emerging, more individualistic sensibility spawned and encouraged by the modern metropolis.[134] Gerling, after all, had pointed to the need for marriage to accommodate the full individuality of both spouses, and he insisted on the importance of raising boys and girls equally and according to their individual preferences and predilections.[135] Other particularly insightful commentators, too, situated the entire marriage debate in terms of the conflict between individuality and individual

[133] Ibid., 24, 28.

[134] Ibid., 3.

[135] Ibid., 28.

freedoms, on one hand, and the stability of middle-class life, on the other.[136] Rudolf Lothar, for his part, argued that reform – whether in the abolishment of church ceremonies or the establishment of free love as a legal reality – would not work so long as individualism (and its dark underbelly, selfishness and deceit) were realities. Until something changes, he concluded, one simply had to "make do with marriage as it is for now" and "suffer through marriage" with humor – easy, perhaps, for a columnist to write; harder, to be sure, for those frustrated with unhappy marriages, restrictive social stigmas, and oppressive loneliness.[137]

Marriage, as it had existed for centuries (and been slightly tweaked, as with the introduction of civil marriage in 1875 and the new civil code in 1900), seemed more and more to stand at odds with a modern, metropolitan sensibility, one predicated on the fulfillment of individual wishes, non-hegemonic (and subversive) fancies, dynamic and ever-changing urban identities, and the ideal of individualism. The way "grandfather took grandmother" was outdated and irretrievable not because it was passé or had fallen out of fashion; it became unthinkable and impossible, rather, because it was utterly incompatible with the way modern Berliners were beginning to conceive of their relations to and interactions with their state, their church, their families, and their lovers. The things that had Berliners talking at the turn of the century, whether it was the propriety of women who preferred work to marriage and broke with the feminine models of their mothers and grandmothers; the prominence of bachelors in the city and the potential threat men refusing to marry posed to the health of the German state; the costs and benefits of allowing free love unions, trial marriages, and hassle-free divorce; or even what it meant that Berlin had over 50,000 old maids – these were more than just idle gossip about a

[136] Pascal, "Moderne Eheexperimente," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 April 1907, Nr. 182.

[137] Rudolf Lothar, "Moderne Eheprobleme," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 30 May 1911, Nr. 272.

neighbor girl who failed to meet someone during evening ball season; much more, they were the sounds of Berliners young and old attempting, with varying degrees of success, to come to terms with a wave of individualism that cut to the core of everything in which they believed.

CHAPTER FOUR: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES OF LOVE

Risks and Rewards

On October 15, 1914, a young woman walked into a bank in the Berlin suburb of Weißensee and told the teller she wanted to make a withdrawal. She slid a small booklet across the counter and waited expectantly for her money while the teller read the account number, 4244, off the booklet's first page and searched for the corresponding file in the bank's ledgers. *One moment, Fräulein Kliem*, he said, and disappeared into the back of the bank. As she was waiting, her mind flashed back to earlier that day, when her sister told her a man had come by looking for her. He reappeared in the afternoon, and this time she was there to meet him. It was Paul, the man she had met on Alexanderplatz more than a year earlier. Paul had sauntered up next to her and asked if he could walk with her for a bit. What a thrill! The man was much older and, better yet, had said he was single and wanted to start a relationship. It had almost seemed too good to be true; and it was, indeed, for he soon disappeared, and she lost all contact with him – until yesterday, when, at the same place on Alexanderplatz, Paul had approached her again. Only this time he had a wild look in his eyes, the look of desperation, even, and he asked her if she was still living in the same place. She was, and he had come already twice that day. Her thoughts wandered back to the intimate moments they had shared, but she suddenly became aware of the teller walking back to the counter. When she saw that he was carrying a small envelope, she breathed deeply. So it had worked after all, she thought, and the teller did not seem the slightest bit suspicious handing her all of this woman's money. Paul had said there would be no problem; he would do it himself, except he had lived in the neighborhood earlier and did not want to be seen. *Just say you're Frieda Kliem if they ask*, he had told her.[1] She did not know who Frieda

[1] "Der Frauenmord bei Finkenkrug. Zweiter Verhandlungstag," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 March 1916, Nr. 129.

Kliem was, but here she was, Anna Piegors, taking all of her money. Well, not all of it. There were actually 144.24 Marks in the account – she could see that much from the bankbook – and to take all of them might have looked a little suspect.[2] So she had filled out the withdrawal form for 125 Marks, though she probably could have taken more. After all, times were tight, budgets were stretched, and single women, especially, were dipping into what little savings they had all the time. She knew because she was single herself, and only nineteen years old.[3]

But the teller did not give her the envelope. A man next to him suddenly grabbed her and told her she was under arrest for theft. This was part of an ongoing criminal investigation, she was told. *But I am only doing this for someone else. He's waiting around the corner for me*, she protested. *Here, I'll show you; I'll take you right to him*. But they told her to wait, and she listened while they decided on their next move. Soon it was decided: she was to take the envelope with her, leave the bank calmly, and waive the envelope at Paul. The police would handle things from there. Anna was nervous, but she had no choice. So she left the bank and walked a few feet to the corner of Landhanstraße and Goethestrasse. There was Paul at the rendezvous point, and she waived the envelope at him.[4] She could see from his face, which bore pince-nez eyeglasses and a greying goatee, that he was agitated, and he hurried over to her to take the envelope. At that moment, the police rushed in and placed him under arrest as a suspect in the murder of the 39-year-old seamstress, Frieda Kliem, whose killer had remained at large for over three months and whose meager savings and bankbook he now held in his hands. Despite his agitation and attempts at resistance, the police whisked Paul away and took Anna Piegors to

[2] Letter from Weißenseeer Sparkasse to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1426.

[3] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 54-61.

[4] "Der Frauenmord bei Finkenkrug. Zweiter Verhandlungstag," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 March 1916, Nr. 129.

the precinct headquarters for questioning. Paul eventually cooperated and gave police his full name: Paul Kuhnt; age: 49; occupation: retired pharmacist; marital status: married with five children; criminal record: yes; and address, Handjerystraße 15, Berlin-Friedenau. He went with the police as they searched his house – presumably to try to hide certain incriminating pieces of evidence – and feigned ignorance when the police found a variety of objects hidden inside of a cabinet: 6 gold-plated coffee spoons; 3 silver soup spoons; 2 small spoons with decoration; and several pieces of tableware with black handles. This was, of course, of extreme interest to the police, who knew that these precise items had been reported missing from Frieda's apartment by friends and neighbors who knew her well enough to know what belonged where. Kuhnt, though, denied any knowledge of Frieda Kliem and claimed that he found the silverware abandoned under the seat of a commuter train.[5] Possible, but unlikely, the police thought. The search through Paul Kuhnt's apartment continued, and it eventually turned up a bundle of envelopes with letters inside. Only the letters were not addressed to Paul Kuhnt; they were addressed to the dispatch departments of several newspapers, including the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* and the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and as such were unmistakably responses to a classified ad of some sort. There were 38 envelopes in all, each one bearing a different handwriting from the others. They were fresh, too, dating mostly from late September 1914, just a few weeks prior. Not surprisingly, this was also of great interest to the police, who were searching for some connection between a murdered seamstress and a 49-year-old retired pharmacist who was married with five children.[6] Indeed, ever since classified advertising took off at the turn of the century, swindlers and others criminals had used ads – personal ads, especially – as a way to

[5] Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

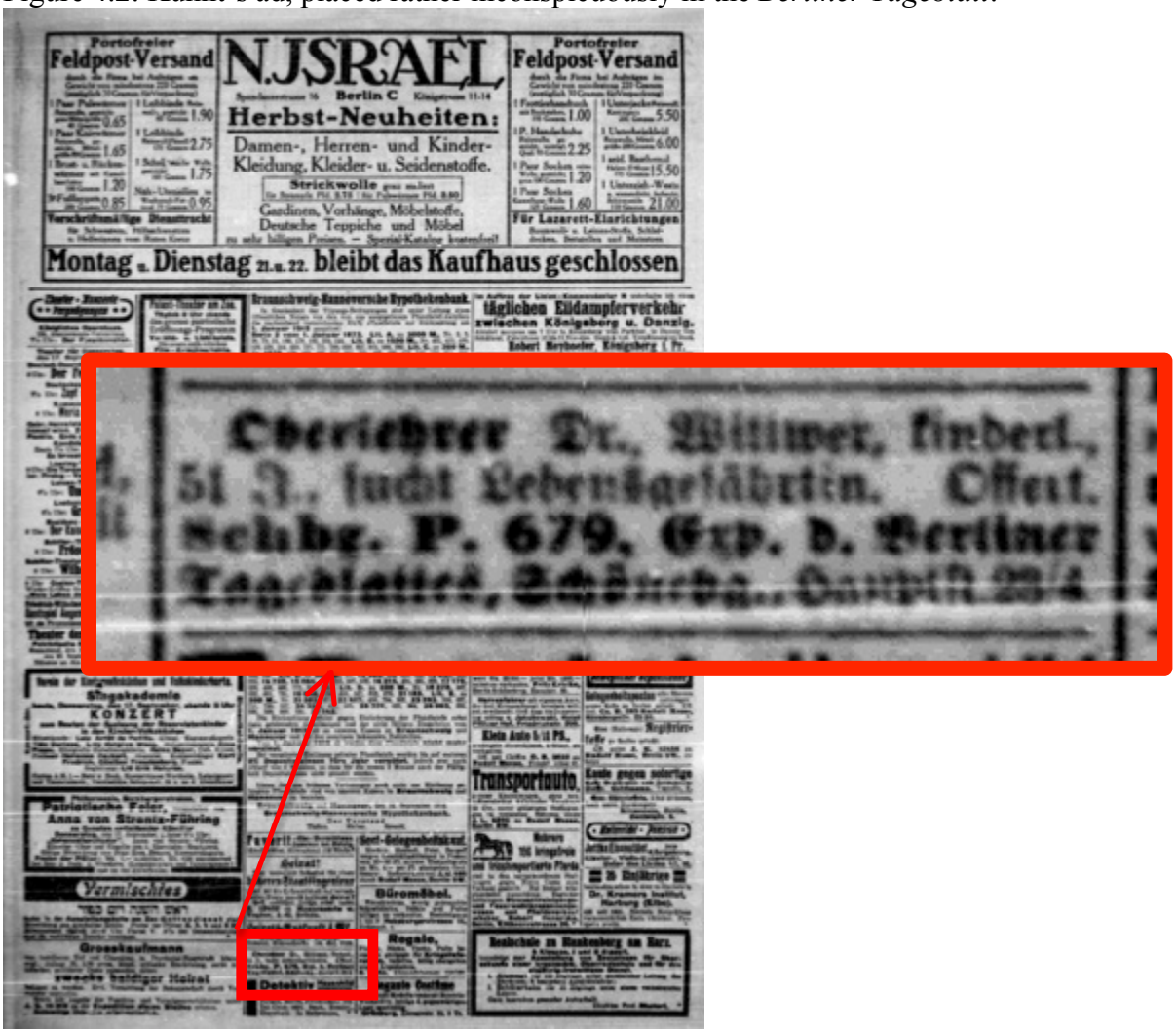
[6] Police memoranda, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 26-39.

Figure 4.1: One of the 38 letters seized from Paul Kuhnt's house.

(Source: Letter from Erna Gärtner to Adolf Mertens, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. Pr. Br. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 26.)

ensnare unsuspecting women with clever or too-good-to-be-true ads and then rob, murder, or slowly swindle them. Berlin was actually still reeling from an eerie, well-publicized, and unsolved murder case just a year earlier involving a 40-year-old seamstress named Emma Schäfer, who was found dead in the Tegeler forest outside Berlin, having been beaten to death with a hammer. The man – her would-be groom – made off with her keys and money and was believed to have broken into her apartment shortly thereafter in hopes of finding a stash of money. Neighbors apparently heard noises in the apartment, and there were even stains from where he had tried to wash the blood off of his hands. But the murderer, Max Kirschstein, who

Figure 4.2: Kuhnt's ad, placed rather inconspicuously in the *Berliner Tageblatt*.



(Source: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 June 1914, Nr. 323.)

had initiated contact with Emma Schäfer under a false name – Karl Schmidt – using a personal ad, somehow escaped and had not been found.[7] The police pulled out the letters, one after the next, and saw that these were well-intentioned responses to Kuhnt's own personal ad by lonely women – some single, some widows – who were looking for love in Berlin and had been impressed by the appearance he put forward in his ad. The ad, which the police easily tracked

[7] "Auf der Spur des Tegeler Frauenmörders," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 September 1913, Nr. 447. The case was so sensational that even at least one Dutch newspaper, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, ran the story of the search for her murderer, as a Google search of the victim and suspect revealed. "De vrouwenmoord te Berlijn," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 5 September 1913, Nr. 617.

down using the corresponding number, 679, at the dispatch center of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, was, indeed, impressive:

> **Senior teacher**, Dr., widower, no children, 51 yrs., looking for spouse. Responses to Schbg. P. 679, Exp. of the Berliner Tageblatt, Schöneberg, Hauptstr. 23/4.[8]

It was the perfect hook. It was simple, striking but not pretentious, and unassuming. What slightly older woman looking for love in the personal ads would be able to resist? The women responding ranged from 30 to 48 years old, old maids to widows, and poor to quite wealthy. None of the women was ready to send along a photo quite yet, but each of them was excited about the prospect of meeting the widower teacher who was just looking for some companionship.[9]

All of the women gave Kuhnt their names and addresses in the hopes that he might contact them for a rendezvous or, at the very least, start a correspondence, and the police wasted no time interrogating them, hoping, on the one hand, that they might be able to provide more details about Kuhnt, the "senior teacher, Dr., widower. 51 yrs., looking for spouse," and aware, on the other, of the fact that they might be in imminent danger. Fortunately for the women who had responded to the ad, Kuhnt appeared to be laying low as he waited for the right time to drain Frieda's account, and, as each woman told the police in a sworn statement, he had not yet contacted them about their wishes to meet with him personally. Kuhnt's silence was no doubt disappointing to these women, who had carefully selected this ad, picked out this stationary, and chosen these words in the hopes of striking gold and finding love; but, given the fact that Kuhnt

[8] *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 June 1914, Nr. 323.

[9] Letters to Adolf Mertens, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 26-39.

was not a retired teacher and widow but rather a dangerous killer, this was clearly the much better result.[10]

In spite of the great interest his personal ad had sparked, Paul Kuhnt thus appeared to have focused his attentions on Frieda Kliem, though the lack of a letter from Frieda was perhaps confusing at first. And while Kuhnt denied ever having met Frieda, these professions of innocence rang hollow in light of the fact that he had, after all, tried to clean out Frieda's account and had Frieda's valuables in his apartment. Moreover, any uncertainty the police might still have had vanished when Kuhnt, while being hauled into the police station, first attempted to make a run for it and then, having failed at that, tried to get at a hidden package of morphine in an apparent attempt at suicide.[11]

Still, even with Kuhnt in custody, the police were faced with the matter of finding evidence that specifically linked Kuhnt to Frieda's death. There was also the question of how Kuhnt had even met Frieda in the first place. Kuhnt's flimsy explanation for how he had come across Frieda's valuables was hardly convincing, but the police nevertheless needed at least a working theory for how Kuhnt had attached himself to Frieda in such a way that he was able to gain access to her valuables and bank account. The most obvious answer, especially given Kuhnt's dalliances with the personal ads, was that Frieda, like the other women, had responded to Kuhnt's ad and arranged a rendezvous. Yet there was no letter from Frieda among the 38 letters sitting in Kuhnt's apartment. Perhaps Kuhnt had contacted Frieda, who had her own ad. It was by no means out of the question, for dozens of women turned to the personal ads for love

[10] Ibid.

[11] Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

and companionship each day with carefully worded descriptions of what they had to offer and what type of mate they were hoping to find.

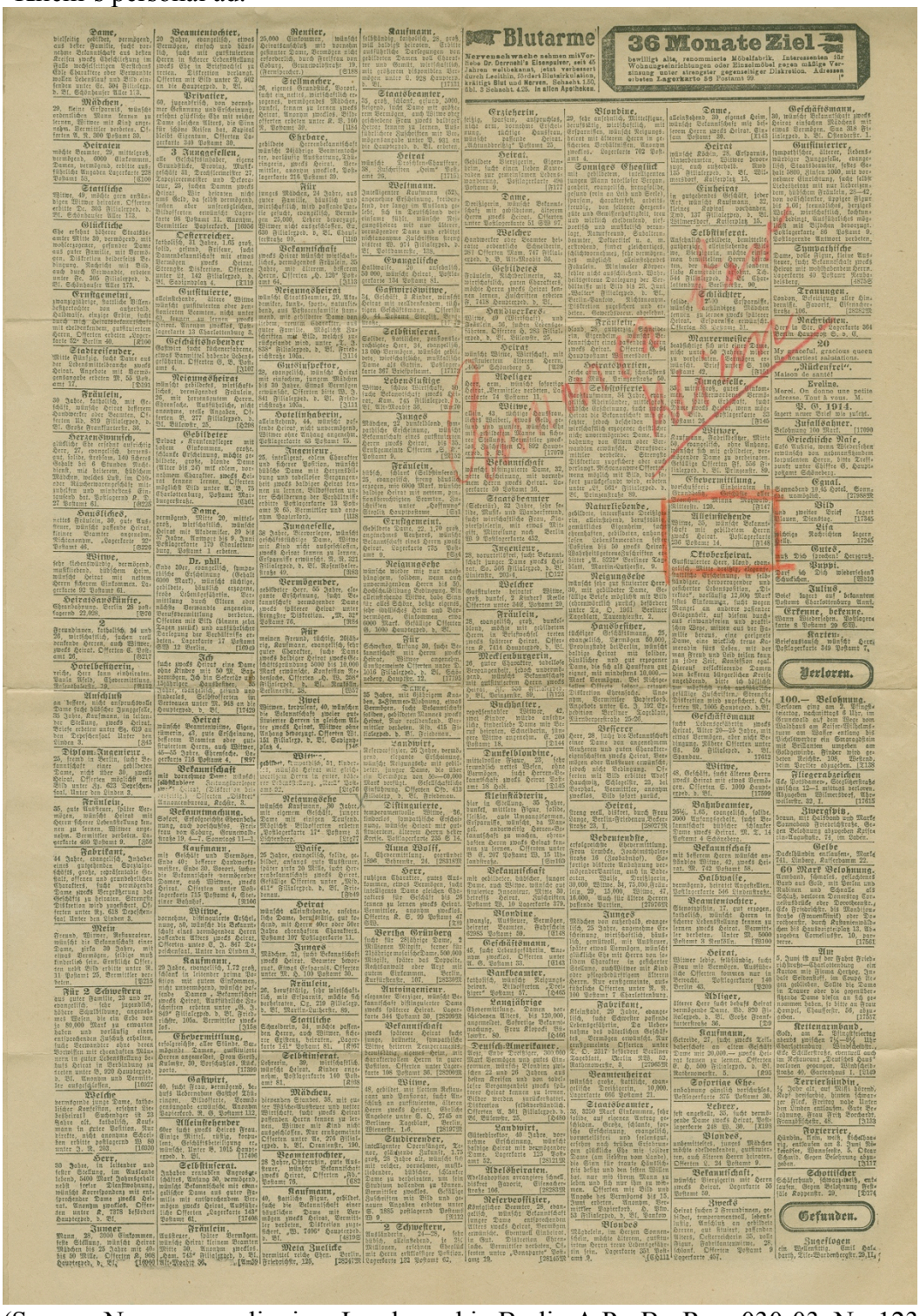
Pursuing this theory was not hard, and the police soon located Frieda Kliem's personal ad in the June 7, 1914 edition of *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*. All things considered, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* was a perfect choice for Frieda, for it ran more personal ads each day than any other major newspaper in Berlin. Plus, Frieda was one of its many hundred thousand subscribers, so the paper came to her doorstep each morning and was published at noon and in the evening, as well.[12] Frieda's ad hardly stood out among the 100 ads on just that same page alone, but it was registered in her name and matched up with the Frieda Kliem her friends and neighbors had come to know in recent years. Indeed, her friend Antonie Köhler revealed to police that Frieda, after realizing that "she wouldn't be able to live on the little she earned and on her savings" and that her previous attempts to find a marriage had failed (after all, Otto Mewes had moved away; Emil Freier was engaged to someone else, and Otto Buning's marriage proposal was still not quite what she had in mind), "tried all sorts of ways to make relationships with men that would lead to marriage."[13] Frieda, in other words, had become slightly desperate in her search for a husband, and her neighbors reported seeing various suspicious men lingering around her door, coming by and asking about her, and, so she said, renting rooms from her.[14] She also, as Köhler confirmed, "responded to personal ads and even wrote her own ads," all with the aim of finding

[12] Ibid.

[13] Statement by Antonie Köhler, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 110-113.

[14] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 10-12, 48-49, 101-103.

Figure 4.3: Frieda's personal ad, located and circled by the police in their characteristic red crayon. The red text, scrawled on the ad by the police in the heat of the investigation, reads "Kliem's personal ad."



(Source: Newspaper clipping, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 40.)

someone – though not just anyone: "but even then it would only be men […] who were from better circles," as Köhler told police – to support her and love her.[15]

So Frieda had posted a personal ad in the newspaper, and, like her desire for marriage, more generally, it was straightforward and to the point:

> **Single** widow, 35, wishes to make the acquaintance of a respectable gentleman for the purpose of marriage. Poste restante 236, post office 14.[16]

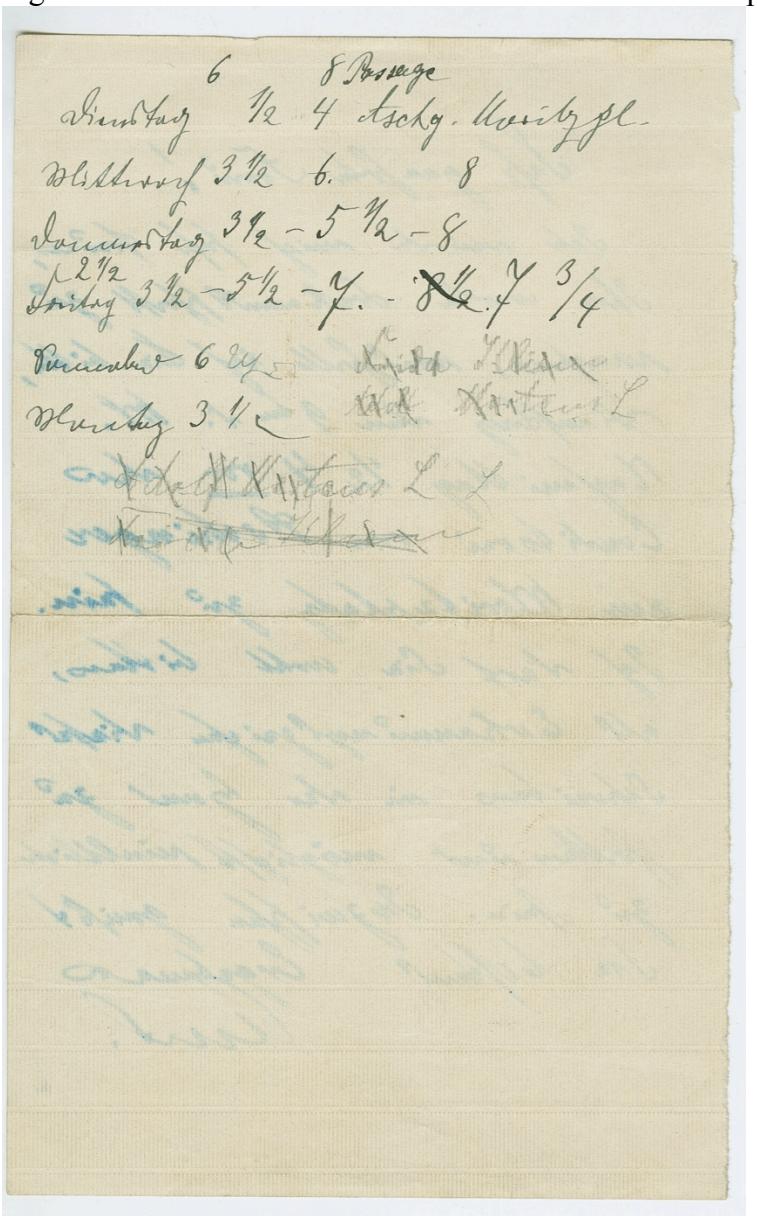
Of course, the ad was not actually one hundred percent straightforward, for Frieda was neither a widow nor 35 (she was 39), but in this it was Frieda to a T. As we saw in Chapter Three, she had for years worn a false wedding ring and lied to others about being a widow, and she had few scruples about bending the truth if it served her search for love and intimacy in Berlin. We also see Frieda's characteristic commitment to middle-class respectability, noting as she did that she was only interested in a "respectable gentleman."

It is not clear how long Frieda was posting ads or even how many different ads she posted, but she did receive at least a few responses. Not long into their investigation, the police discovered several papers and letters among Frieda's things, and two notes in particular caught their attention. The first was two-sided, and on the front side were roughly 9 lines of fascinating but wholly inscrutable jottings that appear to be Frieda's notes about when she was meeting with whom and where:

[15] Statement by Antonie Köhler, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 110-113.

[16] *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 June 1914, Nr. 283.

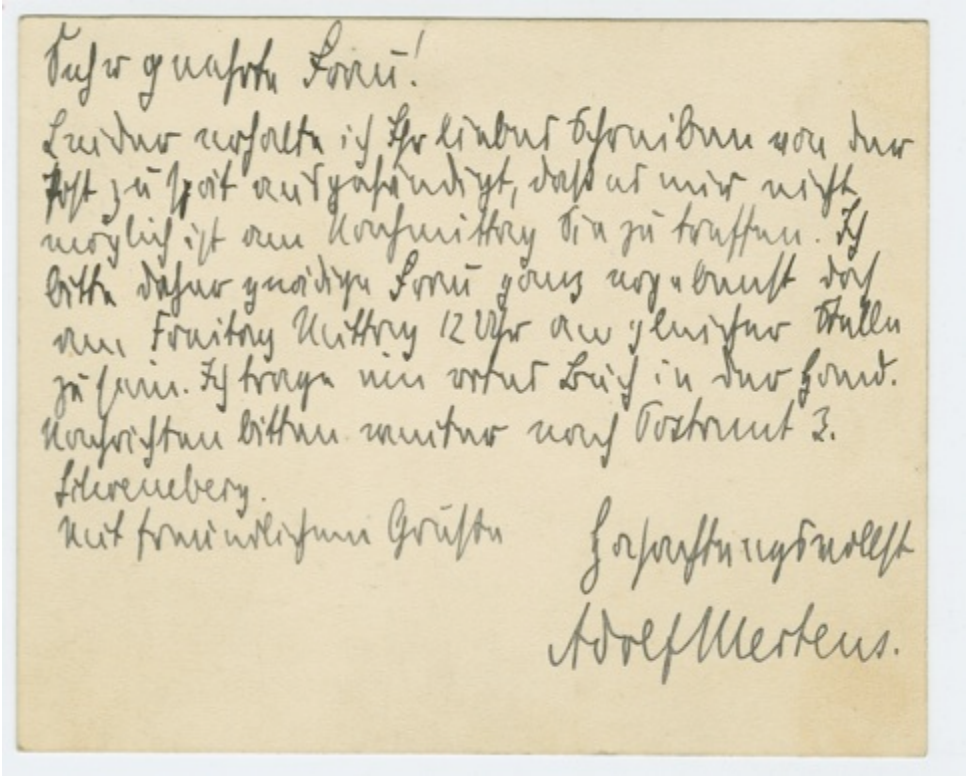
Figure 4.4: One side of the note found in Frieda Kliem's apartment.



(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 40.)

On the other side was a letter that began "Dear Ma'am" and was, as such, clearly a response to her ad. The writer expressed his heartfelt wish to meet Frieda and start a relationship, and he proposed a meeting for the following Tuesday (two days after the ad ran in the Sunday *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*), June 9th, at 3:30 in the afternoon at Aschinger's Café on Moritzplatz. Frieda was to carry the letter in her hand as a means of recognition, and the man requested that she be

Figure 4.5: Adolf Mertens's letter to Frieda Kliem proposing a rendezvous.



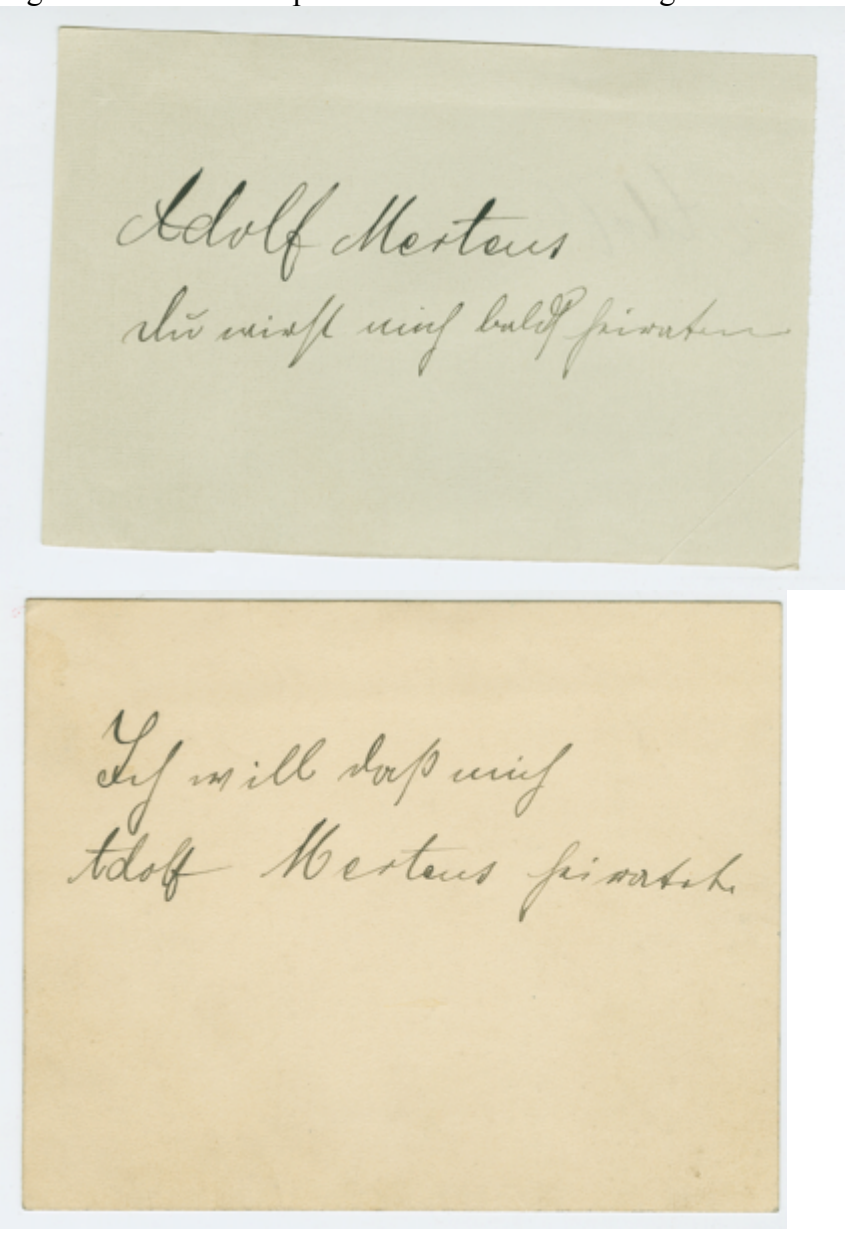
(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 40.)

on time. It is not entirely clear whether Frieda did, indeed, go to Aschinger's Café on Tuesday at 3:30, but the hasty scribbles on the back of the letter make more sense in light of this planned rendezvous.[17]

The second letter was dated just a few days later and bore a distinctly messy (almost childlike) handwriting. The writer apologized that he would be unable to make their rendezvous and that they should meet Friday at noon at "the same place," where he would be holding an old book. Interestingly, the man this time included a name – Adolf Mertens – and a photograph, and Frieda was apparently so enthused about him (based either on their unconfirmed meeting on Tuesday or purely on his picture and letters) that she doodled "I want Adolf Mertens to marry me" on the back of the letter and "Adolf Mertens you will soon marry me" on a piece of scrap

[17] Letter to Frieda Kliem, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 40.

Figure 4.6: Frieda's hopeful doodles about a marriage with Adolf Mertens.



(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 40.)

paper. Next to both pieces of paper was a business card – *Julius Foth, Royal Prussian Chamber Musician, Harpist* – that suggested Frieda was perhaps already thinking ahead and planning a wedding.[18]

[18] Cards and letters belonging to Frieda Kliem, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 40.

Figure 4.7: Adolf Mertens's photographs, as found in Frieda Kliem's apartment by the police.

(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232, Bl. 40.)

Adolf Mertens was, from the beginning of the investigation, thus a person of extreme interest to the police, but tracking down the real Adolf Mertens had proven frustrating. There were, in fact, a number of Adolf Mertenses in Berlin, and the police shot telegrams to all of Berlin's various city halls hoping to narrow down the list of candidates. The responses each provided a date of birth, marital status, and the profession of the man in question, but the police soon concluded that the men were either too old or were long-time family men who could not possibly have corresponded with a single seamstress looking for love. This, of course, was a profoundly flawed assumption, for, in addition to the numerous swindlers who used ads, personal ads, more generally, attracted both single and married Berliners alike. There was one Adolf Mertens who was of some interest to the police based solely on the fact that he lived rather close to the post office where the aforementioned letters had been mailed, but he was 74 years old and retired, and the police concluded that he "can hardly be the man in question." So the police marked his file – like all of the others – with the words, "No further action," and noted in an internal memo dated July 9, 1914 that "The persons in the address book named Adolf Mertens are, according to reliable sources, of good repute, all married, and family men. Each also goes

about his work with consistency."[19] As far as the Berlin chief of police was concerned, these were the cornerstones of middle-class respectability and, as such, wholly incompatible with an act of personal ad treachery.

This was where the initial investigation into the murder of Frieda Kliem had stalled out, and it was not until Paul Kuhnt emerged – while trying to withdraw Frieda's savings from the bank in Weißensee – that the police realized that the name "Adolf Mertens" was perhaps merely an alias used by Kuhnt to cover his tracks. He was, after all, a family man with a wife and five children, and, though he was retired, he had surely gone about his work as a pharmacist "with consistency," as it were. He could not be seen posting (adulterous) personal ads! And yet Kuhnt not only held in his possession the various items that had gone missing from Frieda's apartment; he, more importantly, matched the photo of "Adolf Mertens" and had the exact same messy, childlike handwriting as "Adolf Mertens" had used in his correspondence with Frieda Kliem. These facts, combined with Kuhnt's efforts to flee from police and apparent suicide attempt on the way to jail, pointed to Paul Kuhnt as the murderer of Frieda Kliem, and the investigation was closed.[20]

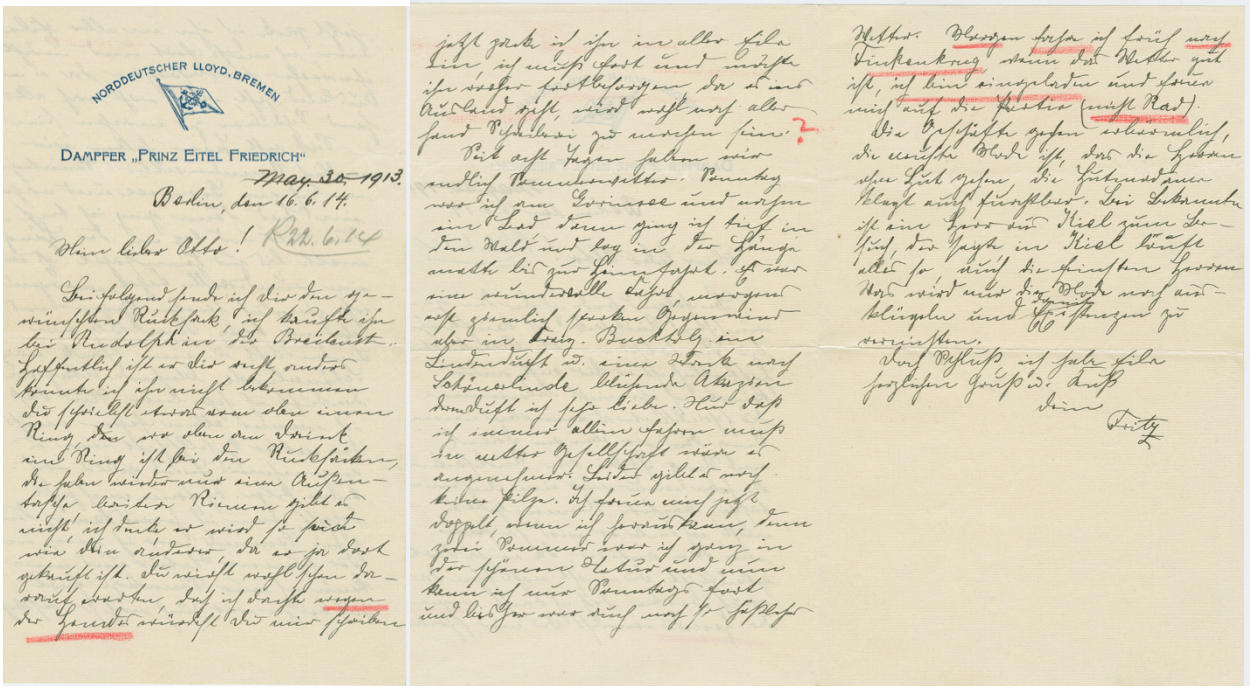
There was, though, still the matter of explaining Frieda's death in the Falkenhagen forest near Finkenkrug, not to mention the specific part Paul Kuhnt (alias Adolf Mertens) had played in her murder. Here the sworn statements of Frieda's friends, family, and neighbors proved helpful, for it seems she was so excited about her future with Adolf Mertens that she doffed her usual mask of secrecy and prevarication and told them about what she had planned.[21] Whether Frieda

[19] Police memoranda, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232.

[20] Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

[21] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 10-12

Figure 4.8: Frieda's letter to Otto Mewes, written on reused stationary (note the crossed-out date) the day before she was killed. The police naturally studied the letter and marked it up with red crayon.



(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.)

met with Kuhnt/Mertens on that Friday at "the same place," the two in any case decided to meet in a suburban forest on Wednesday, June 17, 1914. She wrote as much to Otto Mewes – her former *Verhältnis* and still one of her closest friends – in a letter dated Tuesday, June 16. In the letter, which Mertens forwarded to the police as evidence, Frieda wrote that "Early tomorrow I'm going to Finkenkrug, as long as the weather is nice; I was invited and am looking forward to the "*Partie*" (no bicycle)." Frieda's use of the word "Partie" is interesting, for it was a sort of double entendre that meant both an outing and a marriage match. Otto Mewes, of course, picked up on this and brought it up to the police during his questioning. It is also interesting that Frieda was not bringing her bicycle along. We know how much she loved bicycling, and she had

perhaps even suggested that they ride out to Finkenkrug.[22] But Kuhnt had never learned to ride a bicycle and probably offered to pay her train fare instead.[23]

In her letter, Frieda sounded excited about the planned trip to Finkenkrug, and while her characteristic loneliness and pessimism about the future pervade parts of this last correspondence with Mewes – "Too bad I have to ride alone," she wrote; "it would be much nicer in good company." "Business is bad," she continued further down the page; "the latest fashion is that men don't wear hats, women are complaining about their hats, and a man from Kiel who's visiting friends says it's the same there, even with the fanciest men. How will fashion change next and destroy people's means of existence?" – other parts evince a striking and seemingly newfound contentment. "We've had summer weather for the last 8 days," she wrote to start the letter. "Sunday I was in Gorinsee and went swimming, then I went into the forest and lay in the hammock until I went home. It was a wonderful trip, in the morning [there] was at first a rather strong headwind but then in Buchholz [came] a Linden breeze and a stretch to Schönerlinde with the scent of flowering acacias, which I love." Frieda had always drawn a degree of happiness from time spent in nature enjoying various activities, but it is hard not to see a unique serenity in her words, one that was perhaps the result of Frieda feeling she had finally arrived at the harbor of marriage, as one often said at the time. Indeed, Frieda's "Mrs. Adolf Mertens"-esque doodling, the saved business card of a wedding harpist, and her specific reference to her impending "match" ("*Partie*") all point to Frieda's belief that her time had finally come.[24]

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[22] Letter from Frieda Kliem to Otto Mewes, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[23] Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

[24] Letter from Frieda Kliem to Otto Mewes, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

There were other signs, too, such as the conversations Frieda had with her next-door neighbor, Marie Schönemann, in the days before her death. Marie told police that she had mentioned to Frieda her happiness at having found work. Frieda responded, "You're lucky; I on the other hand am not so lucky. But I have something planned in the next few days, and I'll tell you about it when it's all set up." Marie noted that she "didn't give much thought to what she meant; I can't say whether she was referring to a new job or an engagement," but when, two days later, she saw Frieda again, it became clear that Frieda was anticipating an imminent engagement with Adolf Mertens. Marie accepted a letter from the mailman on Monday morning since Frieda had said something important was coming, and when Marie handed her the letter ("marked in Berlin, written in a nice hand"), Frieda looked relieved: "This is it, actually."[25] It is not clear who the sender of that letter was, but all signs point to it being either a letter from Kuhnt/Mertens confirming their outing on the 17th or, more likely (since no such letter was ever found, and since the handwriting was remarkably "nice"), a response from Otto Buning, the banker with four children who had proposed to Frieda back in 1904. Frieda suggested as much to another neighbor, Hulda Sello, who told police that though Frieda "had wanted to get engaged with a banker, a widower with four kids, […] she gave up this desire because of the large number of children. He was supposed to come back from vacation on June 15th, and she wanted to give him her 'no' decision then. She told me about all of this on June 5th; I know this for a fact because I was doing laundry that day."[26] The letter, in all likelihood from Buning, was then his response, his acceptance of her decision to turn down his proposal once and for all.

[25] Statement by Marie Schönemann, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 10.

[26] Statement by Hulda Sello, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 11.

Frieda, in the days leading up to her planned outing with Kuhnt/Mertens, was thus so hopeful, so confident that it would lead to marriage that she did not renew her personal ad and, more significantly, turned down the marriage proposal that she had been mulling over for ten years. The fact, moreover, that she took such care to give Otto Buning her official and final decision before heading to Finkenkrug where, so she imagined, she would become the bride of Adolf Mertens, provides us with yet another fascinating glimpse into the world of middle-class respectability. Frieda, a middle-class woman in mindset and lifestyle if not in income or savings, was very careful to maintain at least a show of propriety by having only one serious love interest at a given time, even if she had found some measure of intimacy with other men during the time since Otto Buning's initial offer of marriage sometime in 1904. Frieda was not simply running away from her previous life now that a new love interest had arrived on the scene. Indeed, she told the mailman to hold her mail and even mentioned to her grocer that she would be back shortly.[27] Her use of personal ads was not an escape from her heretofore-difficult life; it was the promise of a new life, a better life.

What makes Frieda's hope and contentment so tragic, of course, is that the trip to Finkenkrug turned out to be so different from what she had ever imagined. We know that she put on her blue suit, the one with the white collar and black buttons; a white "crepe" blouse over a white knit camisole and a light grey corset; black "reform" slacks over purple hose with green hoops; and black lace-up shoes. She wore a black straw hat with a silk band and a small bunch of roses affixed to it, and she carried a green silk umbrella. Frieda even took the time to quite meticulously clean, trim, and polish her fingernails, and she gave the same attention to her feet. She also put in a false braid, thinking, perhaps, that it made her look younger than her normal,

[27] Statements, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 106-107, 82.

short, dark-blonde hair. Frieda was in any case dressed to impress, and, having arranged for everything to be in order when she returned, she left for Finkenkrug that Thursday morning to meet the man she wanted so badly to marry. There is no record of Frieda's trip via train out to Finkenkrug, no transcript of the words she first spoke when seeing Kuhnt/Mertens, no map of the route they walked together in the forest. The police did find a depression in the grass not far from where Frieda's body was discovered, presumably, they concluded, created by the couple reclining together.[28]

It is, of course, possible that Kuhnt's intentions were more or less harmless (however extramarital), that, in other words, he had no intention of killing Frieda on that Thursday in Finkenkrug. Perhaps he wanted intimacy. Perhaps he was consumed by the thrill of meeting a stranger through the personal ads. Frieda's closest friend, Antonie Köhler, thought as much; she was in Monte Carlo at the time of the murder, but she theorized to Mewes that the man "got pushy" and that Frieda would not have stood for that.[29] It is far more likely, though, that Kuhnt knew all along that he was going to kill Frieda. He clearly liked what he saw the day they rendezvoused: perhaps it was the gold watch, pearl ring, and gold brooch she wore.[30] Or maybe he liked what he heard: as cautious as Frieda had been, it seems likely that, in her excitement about her new love, she tipped her hand regarding her inheritance, the family land in Wilsnack, or the fine silverware that had been passed down to her from her family. Kuhnt, in any case, in all likelihood saw the possibility of some money, and it is doubtful that his intentions were pure; after all, he was in debt and owed over 1,000 Marks to various people. As a retired father of five,

[28] Report, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 4.

[29] Postcard from Antonie Köhler to Otto Mewes, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

[30] Report, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 4.

he might have seen crime as the only way of repaying his debts. Kuhnt knew the Falkenhagen forest well from his summer vacations, and he likely lured Frieda to a particular spot in the woods where he figured no one would bother them or find her body.[31]

However things progressed that day in the forest, the result was the same: eight days later, as a forester ventured off the beaten path and found Frieda's corpse – face down, her body mostly decayed or rotted already – and called the police. When the police arrived at the scene, they examined what remained of her body and sent samples to a forensic chemist for analysis. There was, sadly, little to analyze, since her head was completely skeletonized and her organs unrecognizable. This was to be expected since Frieda had been dead for eight days, but police were surprised to find that Frieda's jaw was broken in three places and was separated from the rest of her skull. This "could only be caused by violence," investigators concluded. "It is not impossible, though," they later admitted, "that this could have happened from a fall." They were therefore unable to determine a cause of death, especially since no other parts of her body showed the effects of trauma, poison, or other foul play. There were, finally, neither signs of a struggle in the immediate vicinity of the body nor marks in the dirt from the body being dragged. In fact, the only things truly out of place in the whole murder scene were Frieda's keys, which were oddly absent (especially since her wallet – with a mere 3 Marks inside – was still there). This last fact – Frieda's missing keys – fit with what the police discovered over the course of their investigation (especially after catching Paul Kuhnt red-handed), for Frieda's killer had in all likelihood gone straight to her apartment, purloined her valuables, and then waited for things to quiet down before draining her bank account. Neighbors even claimed that they had heard footsteps in Frieda's apartment that Friday, the day after Frieda was killed, and the Friday

[31] Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

newspaper was also strangely inside the apartment. Who else could have put it there?[32] Paul Kuhnt thus fit into the most plausible theory of the case, and the state soon jailed and charged him with the murder of Frieda Kliem, the 39-year-old, unmarried seamstress from Berlin.

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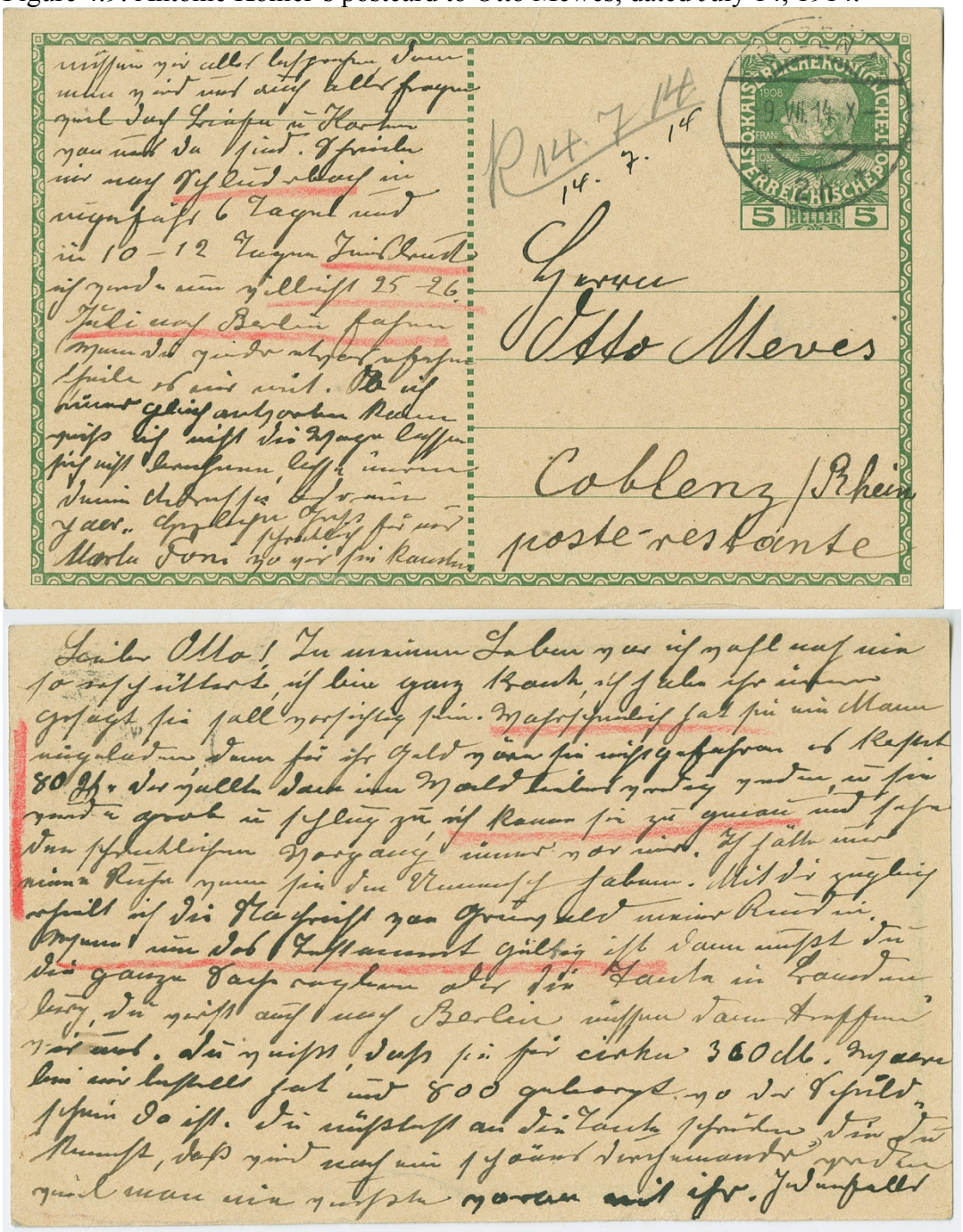
When she heard about Frieda's death, Antonie Köhler, Frieda's best friend, wrote to Otto Mewes, who was in Locarno, Switzerland at the time. "Never before in my entire life have I been so shaken," she wrote. "I feel horrible; I always told her she should be careful." She then moved on to the practical matters of dealing with the death of a close friend (contacting Frieda's aunt – "which will be a complete mess since she's so difficult" – and settling Frieda's debts), but her initial shock and regret are worth lingering on for a moment.[33] Should Frieda have been more careful? Was her use of personal ads reckless, perhaps wanton, unladylike? Or were personal ads a modern-day necessity, something one did because they were effective or because one had run out of other options? Frieda's death, especially when it became known that she had met her murderer through the personal ads, raised these questions for everyone who knew her. Frieda's friends, her neighbors, her relatives – they had all no doubt followed the case of Emma Schäfer and her violent death at the hands of a personal ad lurker, but they were now forced to consider the use of personal ads in a profoundly personal way. The growing popularity of personal ads, in fact, meant that nearly every Berliner knew someone who had used or was using the newspaper to find love or marriage or both. As such, questions about their use and purpose played out all over Berlin and across all levels of society from the destitute to the comfortable middle to the

[32] Report, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 4.

[33] Postcard from Antonie Köhler to Otto Mewes, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

Figure 4.9: Antonie Köhler's postcard to Otto Mewes, dated July 14, 1914.



(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.)

very rich. At its core, the debate was about emerging and dramatically new technologies of love that aimed at a complete reimagining of the entire system of love, dating, and intimacy, and it was far more radical than the modern sensibilities of Chapter Two. Some aspects of these new

innovations no doubt sought to capitalize financially on the problems of isolation, dating, and marriage that pervaded both people's lives and the way they talked about their lives; others, though, represented the daring and organic blossoming of a new system of urban encounters that was so practical, so brazenly modern, that it registered more poignantly than ever before the clash between hegemonic (and middle-class) propriety and the ferocious advance of the modern world.

Modern-Day Matchmakers

On April 8, 1863, Berlin police received a lengthy letter from S. Backhaus, a teacher and bookkeeper who had a rather curious request: with the help of his wife, C. Backhaus née Jacoby, he wanted to open Berlin's first and only official "Matchmaking Bureau" out of their home in the center of Berlin near the Imperial Palace.[34] Backhaus knew what he was up against in obtaining permission to open such a business, and he was quick to differentiate his proposed venture from the "so-called marriage bureaus [that] have always been accompanied by at least the appearance of questionable uprightness." Berlin authorities had no interest in permitting these types of "businesses" from establishing themselves and were quick to close down any that attempted to operate in secret, but Backhaus promised that his would be different. For one, the "Matchmaking Bureau" would never serve as a meeting or rendezvous place for men and women and, as such, had nothing in common with brothels or other sites of prostitution. The "Matchmaking Bureau" was also sure to have a great deal of success "particularly in Berlin," Backhaus wrote, because finding a mate is getting harder and harder. "Pure chance [*Zufall*] does not often enough lead to suitable acquaintances," he continued, and it was as important as ever to find a "path to

[34] Backhaus does not include his profession in the letter, but I was able to find it by looking him up in an old address book from 1863. *Berliner Adressbücher*, 1863. Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, 14.

marriage" that was as "irreproachable" as marriage itself, that "godly and most moral institute." Berlin's elites, especially, lacked other worthy options, according to Backhaus, and the "Matchmaking Bureau" would fill this void with its honorable and straightforward business model. "My wife and I are completely respectable, and I therefore allow myself to hope that I am granted the permission requested." Backhaus included with his request a detailed and rather impressive prospectus outlining the way the "Matchmaking Bureau" would keep a sort of database of men and women who were looking to get married and then match them according to their desires and attributes, but it made no difference: the police promptly denied the request, citing the need to protect "morality" in Berlin. A letter of rebuttal from Backhaus was similarly unsuccessful, and the lack of any further correspondence about the matter allows us to assume that Mr. and Mrs. Backhaus either ran their "Matchmaking Bureau" in secret and without police approval or simply gave up the idea altogether. In any case, Berlin's first official matchmaking service never got off the ground.[35]

Still, as Backhaus's request reveals, matchmaking efforts in Berlin were growing steadily and, frankly, nearly beyond the control of the police, who were so bent on preventing prostitution from gaining a foothold in Berlin that official matchmaking services did not have much of a chance. In fact, this is what makes the Backhaus request for an official "Matchmaking Bureau" so interesting: it was an attempt to mesh an underground and, in the eyes of the police, at least, subversive practice with middle-class respectability. Mr. and Mrs. Backhaus pointed to their carefully designed system and numerous safeguards against matchmaking becoming something less reputable, not to mention their own respectability and clean criminal records – proof that

[35] Letter from Backhaus to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16925.

they were not members of Berlin's underworld but instead good bourgeois Berliners – but none of this mattered.

Neither, as we have said, did the fact that matchmaking was supposedly seditious make much of a difference in terms of Berliners starting and using matchmaking services (legal or not), for would-be cupids saw a ripe market and the ability to make money off of one of the growing metropolis's largest problems: making connections. By the turn of the century, matchmakers had become so numerous that the journalist Paul Kirstein referred to them as an "army" that was growing with each passing day. And since established businesses dedicated to matchmaking were basically out of the question, most matchmakers did so, he wrote in a 1902 newspaper column, as side careers. So it was that furniture movers and factory workers, insurance agents and tailors earned money on the side by matching people (often their own customers) up and skimming off a percentage of any applicable dowry.[36] Other writers, too, noticed the prevalence of marriage "middle men" in Berlin, and columnists and writers alike often chose these hobbyist matchmakers as the subjects of their feuilletonistic sketches of Berlin life.[37] In most cases, matchmakers come off as itinerant, somewhat weasely types, men and (mostly) women who perhaps sat on park benches in the Tiergarten or at empty tables in cafés and looked around greedily for their next prey. The so-called Berlin Observer, the weekly columnist in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, for example, claimed to have done some covert field reporting as a way of understanding the methods of Berlin's matchmakers insofar as he observed a rather portly woman sitting down innocently next to men on park benches, starting a conversation, and then gradually and stealthily steering the topic to choosing the perfect mate

[36] Paul. A. Kirstein, "Verlobungen. Auch eine Osterplauderei," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 March 1902, Nr. 75.

[37] K., "Heiratskandidaten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 20 April 1901, Nr. 92.

and her skills, in particular, at doing so for others.[38] In another case, namely Oscar Pitschil's play, *Die Heiratsfälle* (*Marriage Cases*), the matchmakers, Panse and Lerchenfeld, come off as greasy salesmen who care only about closing deals as quickly as possible and increasing their business revenue accordingly. As one man reminds the other, paying off their debts "is the only thing that matters!"[39] Similarly, critics hailed the matchmaker in the 1907 performance of Friedrich Smetana's play, *Die verkaufte Braut* (*Bride For Sale*), as a comic genius, "a figure of overwhelming comedy."[40]

There were more sympathetic portrayals of matchmakers, to be sure, but these were mostly limited to the informal matchmaking efforts of friends or family members among themselves, as, for example, in C. Weßner's short story, "Ein Weiberfeind" ("A Misogynist"), where Karl slyly arranges a weekend getaway between his friend, a self-avowed misogynist, and a young woman who does, in fact, melt the friend's cold heart and spur him to propose marriage.[41] Indeed, the advice column of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* responded to a reader's question about whether the matchmaking business was shady as such by defending the efforts of the "women who, in their circle of friends, feel obligated to take on this role." "But the whole thing becomes rather distasteful," it continued, "when it is carried out businesslike as a source of income for the matchmaker."[42] For the most part, then, the thematization of matchmakers held

[38] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 July 1902, Nr. 347.

[39] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-05-02, Nr. 3967 (Oscar Pitschil, *Die Heiratsfälle*).

[40] J. L., "Die verkaufte Braut," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 November 1907, Nr. 261.

[41] C. Weßner, "Ein Weiberfeind," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 April 1899, Nr. 81.

[42] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 26 August 1903, Nr. 397.

fairly closely to the oft-publicized dishonest and disreputable practices of so many of their kind, whose swindles and rip-offs filled the crime sections of Berlin's newspapers.[43]

Of course, it was often not the matchmakers themselves who cheated their customers but rather the men and women – whose ill-fated unions matchmakers cobbled together as quickly as possible so as to profit from their nuptials – who swindled each other. Such cases usually followed the script of the 1901 case of "The man with eight brides," as the headline read, where a man used matchmakers to put him into contact with eight eager brides, whom he then swindled to the tune of 25,000 Marks.[44] Other times, though, the line between swindler and agent was blurry, as in the many cases where would-be swindlers posed as matchmakers and then simply bilked their clients out of their dowries, savings, or both. In the highly-publicized 1905 case against the matchmaking service "Veritas," for example, the 63-year-old owner, Ferdinand Gombert, was charged with lying to potential clients, leading them to believe he was using their questionnaires (and accompanying fees) to arrange rich marriages with his many other wealthy clients, and then breaking off communication and pocketing his profits. This rather clever method allowed him to ensnare at least 43 men and women and make off with over 1000 Marks.[45] In his trial, Gombert, of course, claimed that the self-proclaimed victims had simply lacked patience and had "jumped off" the business model too soon. He was nevertheless found guilty and sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence, but others would, in later years, follow in his

[43] For example, "Ein Heiratsschwindler," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 November 1905, Nr. 578; "Die Geschäftspraktiken eines Heiratsvermittlers," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 23 October 1913, Nr. 539; "Ich bin eine Witwe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 October 1903, Nr. 234; "Eine Warnung vor Berliner Heiratsvermittlern," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 September 1904, Nr. 424.

[44] "Der Mann mit den acht Bräuten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 October 1901, Nr. 463.

[45] "Heiratsschwindel en gros," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 July 1905, Nr. 322; "Heiratsschwindel Engros," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 July 1905, Nr. 155; "Heiratsschwindel Engros," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 July 1905, Nr. 156.

footsteps with similar schemes aimed at getting Berliners to buy into a system that, in truth, did not exist beyond an attractive sales prospectus.[46]

Their bad reputation notwithstanding, matchmakers had, by the first few years of the twentieth century, become a popular tool for the way Berliners both navigated and imagined metropolitan life. Newspapers ran feuilletonistic sketches of quaint little matchmaking bureaus that were opening organically (as cooperatives) around Germany, and they described chance encounters at cafés and even mental hospitals in terms of matchmaking services.[47] In this last instance, where a doctor at an insane asylum unintentionally played matchmaker between two patients, the *Berliner Morgenpost* chose the headline, "Not a matchmaking bureau," apparently capitalizing on a growing fascination with matchmaking services.[48] Other cases of fortuitous encounter spun as matchmaking – for example, a traffic accident that ultimately brought the driver into contact with the injured man's wife – were, it seems, attempts to cast the city itself as a sort of matchmaker (its efforts to isolate and alienate Berliners from one another – as seen in Chapter One – notwithstanding).[49] For that matter, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* found itself becoming an unwitting matchmaker to its readers when someone wrote into the advice column asking for the name and address of a teenage girl who had asked for advice about kissing a few

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[46] "Der große Heiratsschwindelprozeß," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 6 July 1905, Nr. 324. Just a year and a half later, a woman named Fanni Wenzel received the same prison sentence for an almost identical racket. "Die Liebesbriefe der Heiratsvermittlerin," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 January 1907, Nr. 5. Later that same year, another man was sentenced to prison swindling Berliners this way. "'Eine vermögende Dame wünsche sich zu verheiraten.' Die 'guten Partien' unter Nachnahme," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 November 1907, Nr. 270. Also "Hinter den Kulissen eines Heiratsvermittlungsbureaus," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 February 1908, Nr. 85.

[47] R. Neurich, "Ein 'internationales Heiratsbureau'. Skizze aus dem Nordseebad Westerland-Sylt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 August 1903, Nr. 203; Wilhelm Cremer, "Das Heiratscafé," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 January 1914, Nr. 4; "Der Photograph als Heiratsvermittler," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 August 1906, Nr. 425.

[48] Hopkins Bar, "Kein Heiraths-Bureau," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 February 1899, Nr. 43.

[49] Fritz Skowronnek, "Ein seltsamer Ehestifter," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 24 June 1904, Nr. 146.

weeks earlier. "We are not that indiscrete!" the advice column balked. "As a matter of principle, we do not engage in matchmaking between the people who write to us for advice." It did, however, attempt to give the reader a cryptic hint as to where the teenager's boarding school was located: "By the way, you can read between the lines of our note – if you are not too young – to figure it out. The works of Karl May can be found in any library. A list of those can be found in the address book for 1903, volume 2, part 4, page 186-187."[50] Whether the advice columnist actually intended to help these people find each other or not is unclear; it does, in any case, reveal the increasing centrality and interest in matchmakers at the turn of the century.

More importantly, it appears that matchmakers had become an actually useful fiber in the tangled and treacherous web of big city love and intimacy. Berlin authorities eventually developed a set of laws to regulate matchmaking, and while the rules about fees and percentages remained confusing enough that the advice columns of Berlin newspapers were filled with questions – from clients and matchmakers alike – about what was legal and what was not, the machine of matchmaking gradually began to run more smoothly.[51] To be sure, there were still people like Margarethe Bornstein, who tried again and again to open legitimate matchmaking offices but were met with the same firm "no" from the police as Mr. and Mrs. Backhaus back in the 1860s;[52] but there were also many more who succeeded in running their own full-time matchmaking businesses, and there is evidence that they actually provided a useful service to Berliners who were otherwise struggling to make connections in the big city (as we saw in

[50] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 August 1903, Nr. 369.

[51] The law essentially stated that contracts for marriage with matchmakers were not actionable. "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 17 December 1905, Nr. 627; "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 January 1905, Nr. 1.

[52] Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 342-02-X3, Nr. 47141 (Margarethe Bornstein, Heirats-Vermittlungs-Geschäft).

Chapter One). Matchmaking, in some form or another, had naturally existed for centuries (if not more) by the turn of the twentieth century, but what is interesting about narratives of matchmaking in Berlin around 1900 is the way that they reworked existing tropes of love into something more practical and modern. We noted in Chapter One Berliners' obsession with fortuitous encounters and love at last sight, as it were; matchmaking was a direct response to this, a utilitarian rejection of the chasm between imagined love and all-too-real loneliness and isolation. The Backhauses, as we know, observed unromantically the fact that "fate" (*Zufall*) only rarely brought compatible couples together; and one news article about a freelance (that is, non-licensed) matchmaker made sure to point out her sales pitch to potential customers that she could *arrange* a "coincidental" meeting with the man or woman of their liking.[53] Another article – this one an exposé on matchmakers – observed dryly that "love at first sight" is rare and that most matches that actually come together are the result of careful, calculated matchmaking efforts.[54] This was, of course, much different than the faith so many Berliners put in cupid's arrows and the (outside) possibility that their soul mate might be walking down the street next to them, and it is interesting that the idea of waiting for that same fate or chance was now considered impractical, even if its allure was so powerful that matchmakers still used the idea of fortuitous encounters to market their services.[55]

This – matchmaking – was the practical method, and Berliners who used it were, as a short story about matchmaking suggested, both happier and, crucially, more modern. Indeed,

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[53] "Heiratsschwindel," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 January 1901, Nr. 16.

[54] Mary Oberberg, "Die Engländerin als Ehestifterin," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 26 October 1902, Nr. 503.

[55] For that matter, as Marion Kaplan has discovered, even (in this case, Jewish) parents understood the allure of the coincidental meeting, decided to "accommodate to modern sensibilities," and expended considerable effort camouflaging their matchmaking efforts so that they appeared entirely fortuitous. Kaplan, "For Love or Money," 148.

Hermann Heinrich's 1902 short story, "Furcht vor der Ehe" ("Fear of Marriage"), features an aging bachelor professor who never married (for the same reasons discussed in detail in Chapter Three) but who, through the ostensibly "fortuitous" (but actually carefully orchestrated) occasion of a dinner evening with friends, meets their thirty-something, old maid "Aunt" Julchen, who enchants him and causes him to abandon his aversion to marriage. Much more, the joy he experiences in his newfound love cures his longstanding health problems, and he, the grey-haired professor, even starts to dress modern and use mustache wax, the quintessential modern invention of the twentieth century.[56] To be sure, this wholesale embrace of mustache wax (and the modern world, more generally) was the result of love itself, but it is hard to miss the very central position that brazenly intentional matchmaking (joked about by the matchmakers as "fate") plays in bringing even the most hardened of bachelors – not to mention the old maid "aunt" – to embrace love, intimacy, and "modern" life.

Critics of matchmakers objected to what they saw as an overemphasis on practicality and argued that this often came at the expense of creating true love marriages, and this was probably true to some extent.[57] On the other hand, and to hear matchmakers themselves tell it (or sell it), modern life required one to be practical, to know from the outset where one stood financially, and to make decisions about marriage accordingly. "Matchmaking institutes have in modern life become a social requirement," Fritz Podszus, owner of a mammoth matchmaking firm (allegedly Germany's largest and oldest), argued. "[It] is a characteristic symptom of our time, one that no cultural historian will be able to ignore."[58] Hans Ringlau, who worked for Podszus, argued in

[56] Hermann Heinrich, "Furcht vor der Ehe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 December 1902, Nr. 291.

[57] "Die Heiratsstifterin," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 4 July 1909, Nr. 166.

[58] Fritz Podszus, "Die gewerbsmäßige Heiratsvermittlung," *Heirats-Zeitung* 29, no. 235 (1913), 1.

Figure 4.10: An ad for a marriage detective – "Discreet! Reliable! […] Tips in inconspicuous envelope," 1913.

(Source: *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 February 1913, Nr. 73.)

the company's promotional material that what smart people do today is use a matchmaking service, for it saves them the "embarrassing question" of their financial readiness for marriage (the alternative was to use a marriage "detective" to procure this information "discretely"[59]). Matchmaking services, he continued, do not, however, try to make decisions of the heart for their clients, for it remains "up to them to search for the answer to the most important question as to whether their characters are right together and whether each other's cultural style, views, and approach to life matches their long-held expectations."[60] Indeed, matchmaking services were aware of their reputations and packaged their services as practical necessities in a turbulent, busy, and financially precarious modern world. Another pitch for Podszus's company presents us with Theodor – the author's "family doctor," we are told – whose medical training has taken a very long time, leaving him little opportunity "to take part in society and see if he couldn't

[59] Ad, *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 February 1913, Nr. 73.

[60] Hans Ringlau, "Gelegenheiten zur Heirat," *Heirats-Zeitung* 30, no. 238 (1914), 1-2.

Figure 4.11: Fritz Podzsus's *Heirats-Zeitung*, published in New York under the title, *Matrimonial-News*, 1913.

Preis 20 Pf. Nr. 235. 29. Jahrgang. 1913. Preis 20 Pf.

Heirats=Zeitung

Unter den Linden 59a
Nähe Bahnh. Friedrichstr.
Tel. Amt Centrum 7895

BERLIN NW. 7.

Vorschussfreies Heiratsvermittlungs-Institut.

Unter den Linden 59a
Nähe Bahnh. Friedrichstr.
Telegr.-Adr.: Podszus Berlin 7

Tel. 4149 Schuyler

Matrimonial-News New York.

385. Westend Avenue

Organ nur für Heirats-Vermittlungen.

Vornehmster und bedeutendster Sammelpunkt aller Heiratslustigen der Welt. Einziges Organ des „Heirats-Klub Berlin". Anzeiger für das grösste Heirats-Vermittelungs-Bureau Deutschlands. The matrimonial news of the world. Organ for matrimonial candidates. Les dernières annonces de mariage du monde entier en trois langues.

Organ only for Matrimonial-Information

Abonnementspreis für Deutschland und Oesterreich Mk. 5,—, Weltpostverkehr Mk. 6.— unter Streifbandversand. Im Kuvert oder Eingeschrieben Postporto extra. Diesen Betrag, der den Verkehr bei mir einschließt, hat „jeder" zu zahlen, der mit mir zum Zwecke der Heiratsvermittelung in Verbindung tritt; jedem Briefe an mich ist eine Retourmarke beizufügen. Abonnements nimmt jede Postanstalt entgegen. Post-Zeitungs-Katalog Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin. Insertionspreis Mk. 0,50 pro Petitzeile.

Auskünfte und Vermittlungen nur durch den Redakteur der „Heirats-Zeitung", Berlin. Sprechstunden im Bureau Unter den Linden 59a: für **Damen** bei vorheriger Anmeldung auch auf Wunsch in der Privatwohnung. Geschäftsstunden im Bureau von 8 Uhr früh bis 7 Uhr abends, auch Sonntags. Für Diskretion wird gehürgt. Photographien, Briefe etc. werden nicht aus den Händen gegeben, gut aufbewahrt und zu jeder Zeit zurückgegeben. Diese Zeitung erscheint nicht in regelmäßigen Zwischenräumen, sondern je nach Bedarf.

Da durch die Auswechselung der Chiffrebriefe in den Grossstädten viel Ulk und Schwindel getrieben wurde, öffne ich sämtliche Chiffrebriefe.

Die gewerbsmäßige Heiratsvermittlung.

Bei den Römern bildete die gewerbsmäßige Vermittlung von Ehen schon seit früher Zeit einen durchaus erlaubten Zweig der Maklergeschäfte. Die soziale Bedeutung des Instituts wuchs im alten Rom mit zunehmender Differenzierung des Verkehrs und der Kultur. Es erhielt eine mächtige Förderung durch die Ehegesetze des Kaisers Augustus und galt damals die Vermittlung von Ehen als eine lobenswerte Tat. Diese Verhältnisse sind bis in die späteste römische Kaiserzeit unverändert erhalten geblieben.

Wann zuerst das Institut in Deutschland aufgetreten ist, wird sich kaum mit Sicherheit feststellen lassen. Daran wird man jedoch wohl festhalten können, daß die entgeltliche Heiratsvermittlung kein dem deutschen Rechte sozusagen antochthones, kein spezifisch deutschrechtliches Gebilde ist. Ebensowenig werden sich wohl historische Zusammenhänge irgendwelcher Bildungen des alten deutschen Rechts, etwa dem Brautkaufe, der Zahlung des Kaufpreises an die Sippe oder den Vormund oder ähnlichen nachweisen lassen. Vielmehr ist es höchstwahrscheinlich, daß sich das Institut erst in einer späteren Zeit entwickelt hat, als nämlich genau wie im alten Rom, eine vorgeschrittene Entwickelung des Verkehrs, des gesamten kulturellen Lebens überhaupt die für die Entstehung und Weiterbildung des Instituts nötigen ökonomischen Voraussetzungen geschaffen hatte. Eine wichtige Rolle in der Entwicklung des Instituts scheinen leichtfertige und gewissenlose Vormünder gespielt zu haben.

Die geringe moralische Qualifikation vieler Vertreter des Heiratsvermittlungsgewerbes drückte natürlich auch das ganze Niveau des Standes in der allgemeinen Achtung herab, um so mehr, als sich auch in den übrigen Zweigen des Maklergewerbes viele unlautere Elemente befunden haben mögen. Die tatsächliche Bedeutung des Instituts ist aber jedenfalls schon im Mittelalter eine große gewesen, wie sich zunächst daraus schließen läßt, daß in den Definitionen der großen Juristen unter den üblichen Tätigkeiten der Makler sich auch stets die Heiratsvermittlung aufgezählt findet. Auch die Entscheidungen der Fakultäten und die reiche Literatur sind ein Beweis für die Häufigkeit und Bedeutung des Instituts.

Die weltliche Literatur hat niemals, wenigstens die prinzipielle Klagbarkeit der Heiratsvermittlerprovision bestritten, weder die Spruchpraxis, noch die theoretisch-wissenschaftliche Literatur. Insbesondere sprechen sich die erhaltenen Reponsen und Schöffensprüche prinzipiell für die Klagbarkeit aus, schließen auch die Rückforderung der gezahlten Provision aus.

Das 19. Jahrhundert, ein Jahrhundert beispielloser allseitiger Entwicklung sieht sämtliche Zweige der berufsmäßigen Vermittlung in innerem kräftigerem Wachstum begriffen und auch das Institut der Ehevermittlung in dem modernen Leben sich eine breite Bedeutung wie nie zuvor erringen, die noch immer im Wachsen begriffen ist. Es ist bekannt, daß mein Institut sich nur ausschließlich mit der Vermittlung von Ehen befaßt. Mein Institut hat völlig kaufmännisch eingerichteten Betrieb ebenso wie andere Geschäfte einen Kreis von Kunden, sogar ging ich soweit hier und in New-York ein eigenes Preßorgan zu schaffen, das periodisch erscheint. Auch öffnen andere angesehene Zeitungen den Heiratsannoncen ihre Spalten und tragen keinerlei Bedenken, solche Inserate aufzunehmen. So ist die Heiratsvermittlung ein charakteristisches Symptom unserer Periode geworden, das kein Kulturhistoriker wird ignorieren dürfen.

In striktem Gegensatz zu dieser allseitig anerkannten Bedeutung der Ehevermittlung stellt sich der § 656 des B.G.B., wonach irgendwelche Gebühren für die Ehevermittlung uneinklagbare Forderungen sind. Diese Bestimmung war aber auch nicht von der Regierung beim Entwurf des Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuches vorgesehen. Erst auf Antrag in der Kommission aufgenommen, wurde dieser Kommissionsbeschluß in der Plenarsitzung des Reichstags mit 128 gegen 127 Stimmen wieder gestrichen, jedoch in dritter Lesung mit 130 gegen 129 Stimmen wieder hergestellt und somit Gesetz. Dieser § 656 ist jedoch entschieden ein Mißgriff in der Gesetzgebung. Hervorragende Juristen treten entschieden für die Klagbarkeit des Ehemakellohnes ein. Das Institut der Heiratsvermittlung ist in dem modernen Leben zu einem sozialen Bedürfnis geworden und ist es demnach nach allgemeinen Grundsätzen unbillig, vorerst die Tätigkeit des Heiratsvermittlers in Anspruch zu nehmen, nachher jedoch Gebrauch davon zu machen, daß nach den gesetzlichen Bestimmungen das für die Tätigkeit versprochene Entgelt nicht klagbar ist. Es steht doch gewiß fest, daß der Heiratsvermittler weit sittlicher handelt, als der, der seine Hilfe in Anspruch nimmt und ihn nicht entlohnt, um so weniger Grund, dem Vermittler die Klagbarkeit seiner Ansprüche prinzipiell zu versagen.

Die Schöpfung des § 656 ist nicht berechtigt gewesen; jedenfalls ist sie nicht geeignet im Sinne des Gesetzgebers erzieherisch zu wirken. In diesem Paragraph steckt aber — gerade in ethischer Hinsicht — eine Gefahr, an die der Gesetzgeber selbst wohl nicht gedacht hat. Die Gefahr einer gewissen Demoralisierung. Könnte sich nicht mancher gerade durch diese Gesetzesbestimmung verleiten lassen — wie dieses tatsächlich in sehr häufigen Fällen geschieht — dem Heiratsvermittler den verdienten Lohn vorzuenthalten, da er ja weiß, daß ihm die positive Bestimmung des Gesetzes von der Verpflichtung zur Zahlung befreit hat? Liegt hier nicht die Möglichkeit, daß durch solche Denkart das Gefühl für Anständigkeit beim Ganzen des Volkes Schaden leide?

Dessenungeachtet werde ich nicht aufhören, zu bestehen; denn, so verfehlt die Bestimmung des § 656 vom sozialen Standpunkte aus auch sein mag, gerade wegen dieses Widerspruches, in dem § 656 zu dem sozialen Leben steht, werden — solange die sozialen Verhältnisse sich nicht ändern — nach wie vor die breitesten Kreise der Bevölkerung an dem Fortbestehen der Heiratsvermittler ein dringendes Interesse haben. Darum werden auch nicht nur die moralisch besseren Elemente unter denjenigen Personen, die sich überhaupt der Ehevermittler bedienen, diesem seinen Lohn auch ohne Weiteres zahlen und somit bedeutet der § 656 nur ein Schutz für diejenigen, die mit der Absicht umgehen, den Vermittler um seinen wohlverdienten Lohn zu bringen.

Für verwitwete Frau Major, 40 Jahre alt, evgl., elegant, 300,000 Mk. Bargeld, suche zwecks Wiederverheiratung geeignete Partie. Offizier oder höherer Beamter, im Alter passend, bevorzugt. Off. unter 15559 a. d. Heiratsztg. Berlin 7.

Bankier sucht für seine **Tochter,** 28 Jahre alt, mos., 1,65 groß, sympat., musik., 90,000 Mk. Barmitgift, einen Herrn mit 8—10,000 Mk. Eink., Rel. gl., zwecks Heirat. Off. unter 15591 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Suche für meine **beiden Töchter,** 25 und 29 Jahre alt, evgl., ½ Mill. Mitgift, 1 Mill. später, zwecks Heirat passende Bekanntschaften. Off. unter 15581 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Für **Tochter** eines amerikanischen Farm- und Großgrundbesitzers, 21 Jahre alt, von großer, sehr eleganter Erscheinung, vorerst einen Jahreszuschuß von 10,000 Mk., später großes Vermögen, suche geeignete Partie, nur Herren in hervorragender Position und von eleganter Erscheinung. Off. unter 15 553 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Suche für **zwei Damen,** Deutsch-Amerikanerinnen, die nach hier zurückgekehrt und sich verheiraten wollen, pass. Partieen. Die Damen sind 20 u. 18 Jah. alt, evgl., groß, schön, gleich 130,000 jede bar u. ca. ⅓ Mill. zu erben. In Betracht kommen nur Herren in erster Position. Off. unter 15601 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Fräulein, einzige Tochter eines hohen Staatsbeamten, Mitte 30er, ca 300,000 Mark Vermögen, sucht mangels geeigneter Gelegenheit auf diesem Wege Bekanntschaft eines gebildeten Herrn in sehr guter Position. Off. u. 15 576 a. d. Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Witwe, sehr sympat., 34 J. alt, evgl., 1,68 m groß, 10 000 Mk. bar Einnahme aus dem Geschäft, 150 000 Mk. von den Eltern zu erben, sucht passenden Lebensgefährten, nur Herren in guter Position bis 50, Rel. gl., auch Wtw. m. Kind. Off. unter 15 682 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Suche für **vornehme Dame,** 38 Jahre, evgl., 200,000 Mark Vermögen, 50 000 bar, 150 000 später, sehr gesund, sehr musikal. Natur u. kunstliebend, viel gereist, sprachlich und gesellschaftlich gewandt, tief empfindend, ausgesprochenen Sinn für harmonisches Familienleben, reichen, vornehmen, evgl. Herrn bis 50. Off. unter 15 616 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

Suche für gebildete, sehr **sympat. Dame,** schlanke Figur, Vater Rentier, früherer Brauereibesitzer, geeignete Partie. Die Dame ist 37 Jahre alt, groß, evgl. Off. unter 15 605 an die Heiratsztg., Berlin 7.

Opernsängerin, 32 Jahre alt, ev., 1,68 groß, aus sehr guter Familie, jetzt gute Aussteuer, 10—15 000 M. zu erben, musikalisch, möchte heiraten und zu diesem Zweck Herrn, gebildet und in guter Position, kennen lernen. Offert. unter 15 402 an die Heirats-Zeitung, Berlin 7.

(Source: *Heirats-Zeitung* 29, no. 235 (1913), 1.)

perhaps find a wife who would make him happy." But Theodor is not interested in the services of a matchmaker, and he tells the author that "having a wife selected for you by a matchmaker demeans and cheapens marriage. […] If I get married at all, I will only marry a woman I have found on my own and only after I am convinced that our life together will make us both happy." The author and salesman naturally has a response ready: a matchmaker only sets you up with a group of women who want to get married. It is still up to the client to pick one who "fulfills the desires of the head as well as the heart." Theodor brings up the frequent swindles, the disreputable practices of sleazy matchmakers – "but you can't throw out all solid, respectable matchmakers just because of a few crazy women" is the salesman's retort. Theodor's final resistance is to argue that he has "such a high, noble opinion of marriage" that he would never want to connect it to anything having to do with business or money, and here the salesman reaches his closing argument in stride:

> We are in complete agreement, especially when you consider the fact that no one is going to ask to you get married except when your heart has spoken. Consider further that marriage, in addition to its ideal nature, also has a legal and financial side. […] I advise you not to wait until an extraordinary fortune falls into your lap […]. For that you're too old, [and] you've had as little opportunity to meet enough women on your own as I did. So take the services of a specialist.[61]

Matchmakers, especially matchmaking services, bureaus, and so-called institutes, thus presented themselves as professional problem solvers, experts who understood that modern metropolitans had neither time nor money to meet the old-fashioned way and whose carefully designed systems, metrics, and databases could be relied upon for a successful trip to the altar. Indeed, as another matchmaking service advertised, "The changing realities in our current go-getting time have created a variety of new institutions [that allow one to] attain a goal quickly and directly. An honest marriage institute counts among the most important of these conveniences." This

[61] Dr. H., "Theodors Bekehrung," *Heirats-Zeitung* 30, no. 237 (1914), 1.

particular owner then cited her "refined understanding, tactfulness, and tenacity," pointed to her "unique system," and, instead of asking for three easy payments, noted that she ran her business solely on "free-will donations" by happy customers.[62]

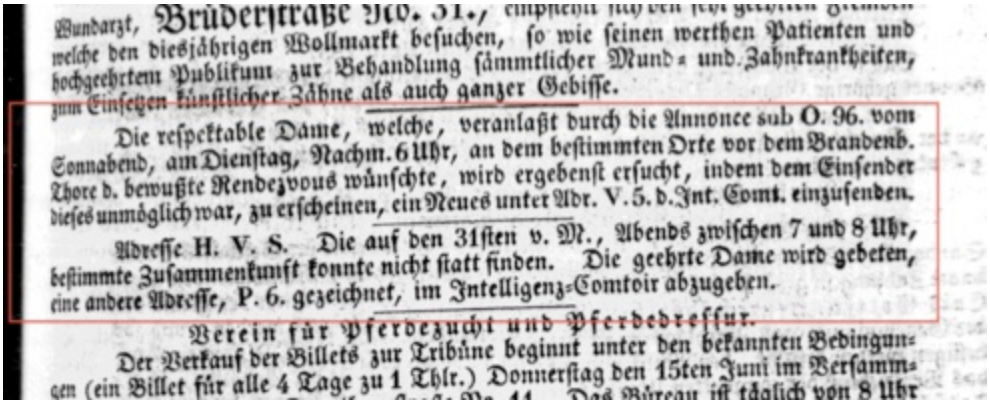
The Rise of Personal Ads

There is no record of how long this woman's "pay as you like" matchmaking service lasted, but its at least temporary existence underscores the fact that, because of what lawmakers saw as a slippery slope between matchmaking and prostitution, matchmakers were forced to operate between fairly narrow legal boundaries (her business model was thus an attempt to avoid these boundaries altogether and work in the shadows). Offering one's services as a matchmaker exposed him to a degree of risk and liability, not least because matchmakers had such a poor reputation. For that matter, there were also risks involved in using a matchmaker to find love or marriage or both, not only because one might get swindled, but also because to employ a matchmaker was in some sense to go public with one's loneliness, one's desperation at finding someone, one's failure to make the traditional methods work (even though quite a few people also "failed"). Indeed, as useful as matchmakers often were, there was something embarrassing and slightly distasteful about handing over control of one's intimate future to a stranger. On the other hand, and as we have seen, not a few Berliners reached the point where the traditional methods had not worked and where they grew willing to employ other, more direct means of finding a mate. If only there were a way to preserve the anonymity, the respectability of that loneliness while, at the same time, working against it.

This, it seems, is the best way of situating and understanding the rise of the newspaper personal ad as a modern technology of love. Personal ads were not new at the turn of the century

[62] Joachim Werner, *Die Heirats-Annonce: Studien und Briefe* (Berlin: Verlag Martin Aronhold, 1908), 36-37.

Figure 4.12: A "missed connection" ad in the *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt*, 1837. The offended mayor appears to have missed the ad directly below it ("Adresse H. V. S. […]"), which pursued a similar aim.



Wundarzt, **Brüderstraße No. 31.,** empfiehlt sich den geehrten Fremden welche den diesjährigen Wollmarkt besuchen, so wie seinen werthen Patienten und hochgeehrtem Publikum zur Behandlung sämmtlicher Mund- und Zahnkrankheiten, zum Einsetzen künstlicher Zähne als auch ganzer Gebisse.

Die respektable Dame, welche, veranlaßt durch die Annonce sub O. 96. vom Sonnabend, am Dienstag, Nachm. 6 Uhr, an dem bestimmten Orte vor dem Brandenb. Thore d. bewußte Rendezvous wünschte, wird ergebenst ersucht, indem dem Einsender dieses unmöglich war, zu erscheinen, ein Neues unter Adr. V. 5. d. Int. Comt. einzusenden.

Adresse H. V. S. Die auf den 31sten v. M., Abends zwischen 7 und 8 Uhr, bestimmte Zusammenkunft konnte nicht statt finden. Die geehrte Dame wird gebeten, eine andere Adresse, P. 6. gezeichnet, im Intelligenz-Comtoir abzugeben.

Verein für Pferdezucht und Pferdedressur.

Der Verkauf der Billets zur Tribüne beginnt unter den bekannten Bedingungen (ein Billet für alle 4 Tage zu 1 Thlr.) Donnerstag den 15ten Juni im Versamm- [illegible] Das Büreau ist täglich von 8 Uhr

(Source: *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt*, 17 June 1837).

– in fact, they were already well over a century old, the oldest known examples dating back to the late eighteenth century – but, until the late 1890s and early 1900s, they remained an oddity, an obscure and mostly ignored method of finding love that was so rare that Berlin police, who naturally suspected that they were nothing more than advertisements for prostitution, took the time to investigate individual ads and determine whether the author should be punished. Indeed, when, back in 1837, Berlin's mayor became of aware of a personal ad in the June 17th edition of the *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt*, he sent a copy to the chief of police and asked him to consider training the attention of the police's censorship office on what he feared was a growing problem. "[Such ads] make it nearly impossible," he wrote, "for a father to be able to read newspapers to his children."[63] This may have been an overreaction, but if we examine the ad, it is not hard to see why Mayor Baerwald was so troubled:

> The respectable gentlewoman, who, in responding to the ad sub O. 96 from Saturday, wished to rendezvous on Tuesday at 6 p.m. at the agreed upon place in front of the Brandenburg Gate, is asked sincerely to suggest another via the address V. 5 d. Int. Comt. because it was impossible for the sender to appear.[64]

[63] Letter from Baerwald to police, 23 June 1837, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16925.

[64] Newspaper clipping, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16925.

Berliners were using the pages of a respectable Berlin newspaper to set up their amorous rendezvous, and while the language was completely aboveboard and chaste, this smacked too much of love for sale. And while the chief of police, who sent the matter on to the Ministry of the Interior, did nothing about the ad in question, the police did continue to monitor Berlin's few newspapers for any particularly seditious or offensive ads.[65] Thirteen years later, the police file that contained these letters back and forth between the mayor, the chief of police, and the Ministry of the Interior was re-opened to include several new ads of interest to the police. This time, however, the police actually took action, probably because the author of the ad was so brazen, so unabashed in his search for love, intimacy, or sex:

> A young, independent, respectable man yearns to start a liaison with a young woman, married or not. He only wishes not to receive less than he offers. Interested gentlewomen are asked to arrange the details via the address A. D. Z. […].[66]

Once the police located the "young, independent, respectable young man," they fined him 50 Thaler despite his unconvincing protestations that he had written the ad for someone else.[67]

Interestingly enough, the man's ad was sandwiched between one ad by a Berliner looking to marry any widow who was emigrating to America and another apologizing "a thousand times" for missing a rendezvous with the author of an ad titled "Je vous salue, Mademoiselle!," but the police seemed content to leave these authors unmolested.[68] Police (and mayor's office) interest in individual personal ads is nevertheless striking, for it points to the fact that personal ads existed and were perhaps even growing more popular in the nineteenth century but remained on the

[65] Police correspondence, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16925.

[66] Newspaper clipping, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16925.

[67] Report, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16925.

[68] *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt*, 7 May 1850.

periphery of Berlin life. Of course, it is possible that ads might have exploded earlier than they did, possible, in other words, that the need for that particular technology of love existed already in the 1850s; but personal ads relied on a very specific medium – newspapers – and these did not take off in Berlin until the very late nineteenth century. Papers like the *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt* existed, but the readership was small and the distribution extremely limited.[69] Interestingly enough, personal ads have another type of ad to thank – commercial advertising – for their remarkable rise at the turn of the century, for it was the decision to run commercial ads alongside international news, local happenings, and stock prices, not to mention the subsequent re-investment of advertising money into larger, faster, and more numerous presses, reporters, and distributers, that allowed daily newspapers to become the single most important piece of urban text in the turn-of-the-century metropolis. As Peter Fritzsche has so finely put it,

> At the end of the nineteenth century, the big-city daily had become the primary source of information and entertainment for metropolitans. It was cheap and easy to get either at street-corner kiosks or by weekly subscription, and it was at once workaday in orientation and comprehensive in scope. [The newspaper had become] as commonplace and indispensable and satisfying as a glass of beer.[70]

And while scholars – most notably Fritzsche in his groundbreaking book, *Reading Berlin 1900* – have rightfully focused on the daily newspapers' short, snappy news reports, feuilleton sketches, and convenient layout that could be read between stops on the streetcar as the hallmarks of this new register of modern, urban life, they have largely ignored personal ads. In fact, of the few historical studies of ads that do exist, most are more interested in examining the moral outrage they caused and the way social reform movements sought to reign them in than situating the ads themselves as modern instruments and illuminating registers of the tensions of

[69] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 52-53.

[70] Ibid., 58.

modern, metropolitan society.[71] Scholars, indeed, seem to have skimmed past the columns and pages of tiny, rectangular, seemingly interminable ads that made up the meaty core of newspapers and gave them their characteristic heft. We know, however, that the Berliners who snatched up daily newspapers and made them such a vital part of the city did not look past them; in fact, if they were not using ads themselves (and many, many were), they were completely fascinated by them and, if anything, found them impossible to overlook. An 1899 feuilleton piece about what Berliners read when they sat in the cafés that dotted the street corners, for example, observed that while most readers were interested in politics and economics, even those who craved only this serious fodder "naturally read the ads, too."[72] Max Pollaczek's article just a year later took a similar angle and attempted to document the variety of ways in which Berliners read the newspapers. There were those who went through the paper systematically from front to back, others who "snacked" on various parts of it like hors d'oeuvres at a party, and still others – women, he said – who, no matter what, went straight for the engagement announcement section of the ads and only then turned to the feuilleton ("especially the serial novel") and local news, in that order.[73] When the *Berliner Morgenpost* described the sights and sounds of life on its famous

[71] Classified ads have received only very scant treatment by historians. For example, Karin Hausen's article, "Die Ehe in Angebot und Nachfrage. Heiratsanzeigen historisch durchmustert," in Ingrid Bauer et al (eds.), *Liebe und Widerstand: Ambivalenzen historischer Geschlechterbeziehungen* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005): 428-448, essentially argues that classified ads deserve more attention. Marion Kaplan's fantastic essay, "For Love or Money," gestures are some of the points made in each chapter of this dissertation, but her concern is primarily the centrality of dowries in Jewish marriages. Two other historians concentrate on classified ads but are interested in the moral outrage they incited: see H. G. Cocks, *Classified: The Secret History of the Personal Column* (London: Random House, 2009); H. G. Cocks, "Peril in the Personals: the dangers and pleasures of classified advertising in early twentieth-century Britain." *Media History* 10, no. 1 (2004): 3-16; and Stephan Lovell, "Finding a Mate in Late Tsarist Russia: The Evidence from Marriage Advertisements." *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 1 (2007): 51-72. The only other notable work on classifieds comes from contemporary anthropology: see Annegret Braun, *Ehe- und Partnerschafts-vorstellungen von 1948-1996: eine kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse anhand von Heiratsinseraten* (Münster: Waxman, 2001).

[72] J. B., "Was sie im Café lesen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 25 October 1899, Nr. 251.

[73] Max Pollaczek, "Wie man die Zeitungen liest," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 September 1900, Nr. 225.

Friedrichstrasse in a feuilletonistic sketch in 1901, it could not help but include the shouts of a street vendor hawking "The *Heirats-Zeitung*! Organ for all who want to marry rich and happy!"[74] In perhaps one of the most telling anecdotes from Berlin nightlife, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* reported on a masquerade ball put on by the Society of the Deaf (*Verein der Taubstummen*) and took special care to describe the most interesting costume: someone came dressed as a *Litfaß-Säule* – one of the immensely popular advertising pillars that stood on most street corners throughout Berlin – and was an immediate hit. "[The costume pillar] is covered from top to bottom with interesting ads," Maximilian Wolff described. "Everyone surrounds it, everyone wants to study the ads."[75]

Literature, too, shows us Berliners reading ads, as, for example, in Rudolf Hirschberg-Jura's short story, "Ein Zeitungsausschnitt" ("A Newspaper Snippet"), where the protagonist, while going about his morning routine of eating breakfast and reading the newspaper, notices immediately that someone has cut an ad out of his paper. "By habit his eyes glanced over the ads, when suddenly his attention was grabbed by a nothingness, to wit, an empty, square, cut-out place in the middle of that most beloved column in which the marriage ads, box-number greetings, and anonymous escapades are all gathered together."[76] Personal ads made their way into the theater, as well, as in Rudolf Schwarz's 1909 comedy, *Liebesleute* (*Lovers*), which showed Berliners reading ads, even if, in this case, the sheer volume of ads could be frustrating. "Nine – ten – eleven sections and nothing but ads!," exclaims the cantankerous father of a young

[74] H. Dt., "Berlin wie sie wird und ist: Die Friedrichstadt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 17 November 1901, Nr. 271.

[75] Maximilian Wolff, "Maskenball der Taubstummen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 March 1901, Nr. 105.

[76] Rudolf Hirschberg-Jura, "Ein Zeitungsausschnitt," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 November 1910, Nr. 314.

man who, himself, has just written an ad.[77] There was also Richard Kessler and A. Stein's comedy, *Die Heiratsannonce* (*The Personal Ad*), where Annchen thwarts her father's attempt to marry her off through a personal ad by intercepting the responses and disguising her country-bumpkin boyfriend, "Bummel," as the refined, monocle-wearing cavalier her father had selected for her.[78]

This – characters using ads – was, in fact, quite a common feature of turn-of-the-century literature. The Berlin novelist Dora Duncker wrote a lengthy collection of short stories that each started with a personal ad and then followed her imagination of the responses and experiences the person enjoyed because of it.[79] Karl Escher's 1911 short story, "Die Verlobungseiche" ("The Engagement Oak") features Anny, who has just had a fight with her fiancé and decides to post a personal ad saying she wants to get married and will be walking by a well-known oak tree on Easter Sunday. As it happens, there is beautiful weather on Easter Sunday and many people are out walking, and the dozens of men who show up to meet the eager young bride end up finding mates in the women who, wanting to enjoy the weather, have unwittingly made their way to the rendezvous point. Anny's fiancé shows up, as well, and the two use the opportunity to patch things up.[80] In still another story, we watch Martha, a woman entering her forties still unmarried, as she decides she will post a personal ad and try to find her own bit of happiness. Of the responses she receives, she selects that of Friedrich Müller, whose letter seems very proper

[77] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-05-02, Nr. 4782 (Rudolf Schwarz, *Liebesleute* (Berlin: Berliner Theater-Verlag, 1909), 5).

[78] Rudolf Kessler and A. Stein, *Die Heiratsannonce* (Berlin: Verlag von Kühling & Güttner, Theater-Buchhandlung, 1910).

[79] Duncker, *Reelles Heiratsgesuch*.

[80] Karl Escher, "Die Verlobungseiche," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 April 1911, Nr. 105.

Figure 4.13: Paul Burow's clever use of a convenient pun as a way to move some product.

(Source: *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 March 1905, Nr. 119; *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 January 1906, Nr. 18.)

and lacks spelling and typographical errors. When they finally meet at Aschinger's on Alexanderplatz, she falls for him immediately and accepts his marriage proposal afterwards in the Tiergarten, only to discover too late that he has been swindling her of her modest but hard-earned savings.[81]

Even commercial advertisers seized on the popularity of personal ads. Paul Burow's furniture store, for example, regularly ran two ads that made use of a clever pun on the word "marriage" (*Ehe*). *Ehe* as a preposition meant "before," which was how Paul Burow's furniture shop meant it ("Before you buy furniture, take a look at Paul Burow's furniture shop," the ads went), but by titling them "Ehe" and placing them near the engagement announcements, in one case, and making it look like a personal ad, in the other, it seems obvious that the ads were meant

[81] Rem., "Reelles Heiratsgesuch," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 October 1909, Nr. 273.

to catch the eyes of those looking not for furniture but for love.[82] There was also the story – which was actually a real news story, not a work of fiction – of the businessman who wanted to jump-start his new venture, a café, and decided to use the personal ads to do so. He posted two ads in the newspaper, one as the daughter of a factory owner looking to find a husband, the other as a wealthy bachelor finally ready to get married, and answered the many responses he received by arranging a rendezvous at his very own café on the day of its grand opening. Needless to say, dozens of Berliners made their way to the café that afternoon with hopes of meeting their dream spouses, only to find that the whole thing had been a ruse meant to drum up business. The *Berliner Morgenpost*'s report of the spectacle nevertheless mused that "perhaps a few hearts did actually find each other while they were waiting; perhaps some of the men decided they could live without the [rich] father-in-law, the women without the sizable wealth of their future husband, and were content with the attainable." The café owner, in any case, did a booming business that day.[83] Not surprisingly, the *Berliner Morgenpost* ran a fictional retelling of the event just a few years later, though in this case the café owner decided to repeat his ploy each night. Consequently, the café grew into a rather popular locale for single Berliners looking to get married.[84]

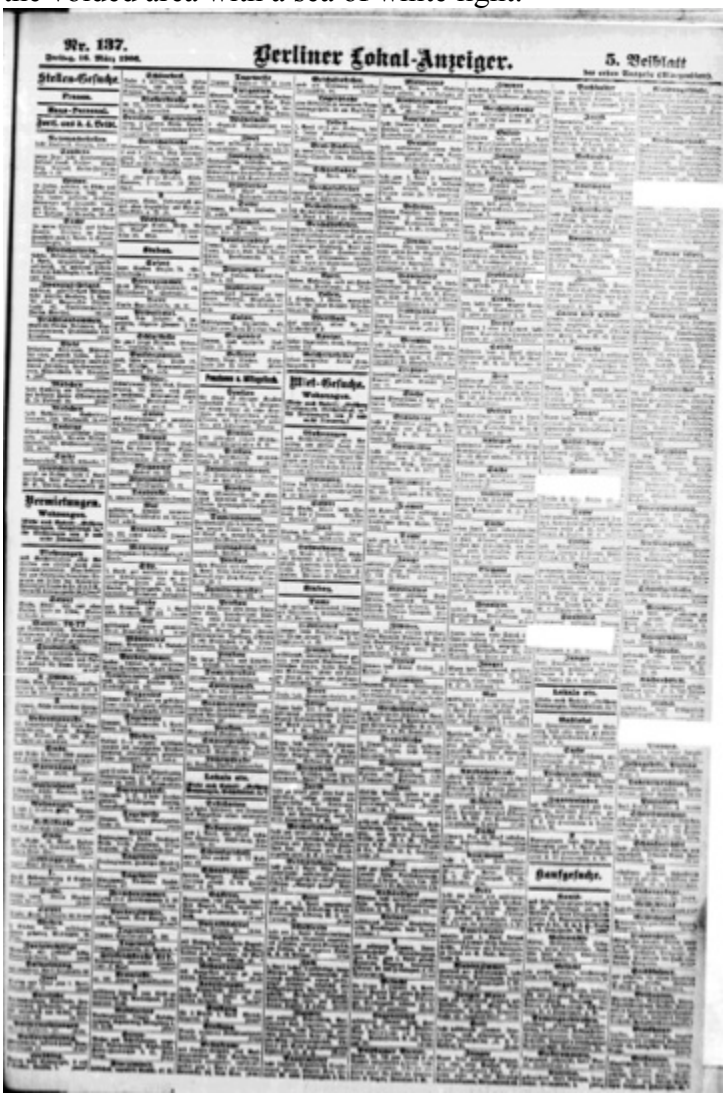
There can thus be little doubt that nearly all Berliners read ads, but they were not simply read as fodder for discussion or quite enjoyment; they were cut out, circled, and passed along to others who wanted them. In fact, just as the aforementioned protagonist in a short story found his newspaper filled with holes from ads being cut out, so also does the modern-day reader find that

[82] *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 March 1905, Nr. 119. *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 January 1906, Nr. 18.

[83] "Das Rendezvous im Café," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 4 January 1907, Nr. 3; "Ein pfiffiger Caféhauswirt," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 3 January 1907, Nr. 4.

[84] Wilhelm Cremer, "Das Heiratscafé," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 January 1914, Nr. 4.

Figure 4.14: One of the many pages of ads that are riddled with holes. The effect of reading a newspaper that has been cut up is admittedly less impressive on a microfilm reader, which fills the voided area with a sea of white light.



(Source: *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 March 1906, Nr. 137, accessed via microfilm at the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin.)

many of the surviving copies of the turn-of-the-century newspapers display the telltale marks of their ads having been read and cut out. The few Berliners who were not reading ads found themselves hounded by newspaper columnists exhorting them to be sure to do so. Max Pollaczek, in his piece on how Berliners read newspapers, cautioned readers who had made the mistake of avoiding the ads section by asserting that the ads were far more interesting than anything else in the entire newspaper – "for thoughtful readers, at least." "The content of the

newspaper," he wrote, "consists of reports about all sorts of more or less strange happenings; what's in the ads section, however, is real life." "The social relationships of the population play out with extreme fidelity in the columns of the ads," he continued, "and whoever has a bit of fantasy could form from two-, three-, and four-lined ads a novel more striking and gripping than any bit of fiction – and it would hold very close to the truth."[85] The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*'s weekly columnist, the Berlin Observer, penned several similarly rhapsodic columns on the personal ads and called them a piece of Berlin cultural history worth reading, studying, analyzing, and appreciating. "Nearly every ad," he wrote, "[…] forms a note in this symphony [of life]."[86] People only browse newspapers anymore, he wrote in 1910, for the special announcements and the ads. "Other than the news," even he – the public voice of the newspaper editors – counted the ads "as the most important page of the newspaper."[87]

But there was more to it than a simple fascination with ads as an indispensable cultural document or interesting window onto "real life," as it were. After all, the real lives observers and columnists so often praised were exactly that: real, genuine lives of Berliners who were, by the thousands, using ads for serious purposes each and every week. Indeed, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, which ran far more ads than any other daily newspaper in Berlin, regularly reminded its readers to place their ads early so they could be included in the popular Sunday edition of the paper.[88] By 1901, personal ads, specifically, had established such a critical mass that newspapers felt the need to create an entire section for "marriages" alongside the various other groupings

[85] Max Pollaczek, "Wie man die Zeitungen liest," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26 September 1900, Nr. 225.

[86] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 December 1906, Nr. 638.

[87] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 18 December 1910, Nr. 641.

[88] For example, *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 October 1906, Nr. 527.

(jobs for men, jobs for women, housing, services, items for sale, etc.).[89] There was no single "type" of Berliner who used personal ads, and a quick glance through the thousands upon thousands of ads reveals ads from every class, background, and financial situation. We know, from the handful of empirical studies about personal ads published at the turn of the century (for scholars, too, found personal ads extremely interesting),[90] that men generally wrote more ads than women (at a rate of 2:1) and that most ads were written by Berliners in their early thirties.[91] Posting an ad was easy and was relatively anonymous (except, as we have seen, to the police), but it was not free, and most or all newspapers simply charged by the word. The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, for example, charged 15 cents per word, as did the *Berliner Morgenpost* and the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Bolded titles cost an extra 40-50 cents, depending on the paper, and words with more than 15 letters often counted double. The average personal ad ran about 25 words and, in most cases, required a title, which meant that one commonly paid just over 4 Marks for an ad. This was no small sum, especially considering how tight budgets were for all but the wealthiest single Berliners. Frieda Kliem's ad, for example, which ran just 13 words, would have cost her 2.35 Marks – a pittance, maybe, but it actually represented a rather sizable portion of her meager

[89] *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 August 1901, Nr. 373.

[90] In general, people interested in studying personal ads used one of two methods: either they posted a variety of prop ads on their own and then studied the responses, or they responded to real ads and, if granted access, interviewed the authors of those ads about their experiences, successes, and failures. For an example of the first method, see Dr. Leo Perry, *"Auf diesem nicht mehr ungewöhnlichen Wege…" Der Liebesmarkt des Zeitungs-Inserates* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927). For the second, see Werner, *Die Heirats-Annonce*. In a third and rather spectacular case, a Berlin author named Karl Theodor Dreste (who published under the pseudonym "Spektator-Jüngster") published a sort of memoir about – as the title goes – *Love-crazy Women: or what I experienced when searching for a spouse* [*Liebestolle Weiber: oder Was ich auf der Suche nach einer Gattin erlebte*]. Dreste's book, which he published himself, carried the tagline, "A very practical and useful book for every marriage-eligible young woman," and promised a "large number of heart-stopping original letters by normal as well as **perverse modern marriage-seekers**." Whether or not the ads – and accompanying experiences – were real or fictitious is impossible to know, but Dreste's book nevertheless made for rather sensational reading. Karl Theodor Dreste, *Liebestolle Weiber: oder Was ich auf der Suche nach einer Gattin erlebte* (Berlin: Verlag Karl Theodor Dreste, 1914).

[91] Werner, *Die Heirats-Annonce*, 10, 12.

30 Mark per month income. Some ads were much longer – the one directly below Frieda's would have cost the "well-situated gentleman" over 14 Marks – and many ads appeared several days in a row (or longer).[92] These costs all added up, and while personal ads were naturally accessible to any- and everyone, there was thus a practical limit on the extent to which one could make use of them, depending on her financial situation.

Ads usually followed what became a sort of unwritten, informal pattern of listing one's basic attributes – approximate age, profession, and a cryptic statement about wealth – and then specifying the corresponding qualities of the desired mate. But each ad was different. Some listed a religious affiliation (or lack thereof); others explained their particular plight (typically a lack of family connections or opportunity, as we saw in Chapter One) and justified why they had decided to use "this no longer uncommon method" ("*auf diesem nicht mehr ungewöhnlichen Wege*") to find a spouse; still others cited very specific traits they were looking for, whether it was a special domestic skill, a hair color that the dream spouse simply needed to have, or, most commonly, and especially in ads written by men, a level of savings or income that had to be present. This last bit was particularly frustrating to the many Berliners who quite simply did not have any money, as one woman lamented to her fellow newspaper readers. The woman – "one for many," as she referred to herself – described how she often found ads whose requirements she met ("honorable, loving, thrifty") but found herself excluded from consideration "because I don't have any 'assets'. It's surely the same for many others, too." "Should we all become old maids?" she asked.[93] She was certainly right that others shared her plight, and her letter set off such a firestorm of similar letters to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* that the editors, who kept trying

[92] *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 June 1914, Nr. 283.

[93] "Öffentliche Meinung: 'Vermögen erwünscht,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 16 February 1908, Nr. 85.

to stop the debate, finally, after over a month of argument, told readers that they would throw any additional responses in the garbage.[94]

The proviso of "assets" was particularly frustrating for women, for while men and women largely wrote similar ads, women, as Joachim Werner concluded in his 1908 study of several thousand personal ads in Berlin newspapers, rarely requested savings but nearly always referred to their own (if they had any). Men, on the other hand, usually requested savings but often did not reveal how much they had.[95] There were other differences, too, things men and women each tended to emphasize. Women, as the regular columnist Dorothee Goebeler complained after she had helped a man go through some 263 responses to an ad he had posted, all emphasized their "inner life," which she derided as simply a meaningless "fad," a poor substitute for real, genuine expressions of personality and intellect. "Women of the twentieth century" nevertheless all advertise it, she wrote, from the teenager to the mother with grown children, the telephone operator to the rich, for "it is for the soul what the slit skirt was for the leg […]: the latest novelty!"[96]

But it was not just women who felt compelled to ascribe certain popular attributes to themselves; men, too, had their go-to lines, the most popular of which had to be discretion and honor. Nearly all men closed their ads with the assurance that "discretion is a matter of honor" ("*Diskretion Ehrensache*"), which, especially when they were also requesting a photograph (as most did), was apparently meant to guarantee any respondents that they would not expose them for having used personal ads. They also quite frequently wrote that "anonymity is pointless" (or

[94] "Öffentliche Meinung: 'Vermögen erwünscht,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 March 1908, Nr. 150.

[95] Werner, *Die Heirats-Annonce*, 16.

[96] Dorothee Goebeler, "Die Frau mit dem Innenleben," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 July 1914, Nr. 380.

simply "no anonymity"), as one woman protested in a 1908 reader letter to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*. "Why do men insist on this condition?" she asked, arguing that such stipulations only delegitimized the entire medium of the personal ad. "A woman from [better] circles and, in my opinion, such a man, too, cannot simply throw about her name by immediately providing it to an anonymous ad."[97] This, of course, was the inherent risk of personal ads, and the focus on inner life, discretion, honor, and the most common personal ad phrase of all, *respectability*, says a lot about the nature of this emerging technology of love. Personal ads were without a doubt becoming a prominent part of the modern metropolis, but, their popularity notwithstanding, they stood in tension with dominant middle-class respectability. Berliners who considered posting personal ads had to weigh the costs against the potential benefits, both of which were immense.

The Wager of Advertising

For one, there was the problem of anonymity. Women, who were so often required to send photographs along with their responses to anonymous ads, faced the potential embarrassment of having those pictures made public if the correspondence never amounted to anything. One distraught woman wrote for advice to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* about how to get her photograph back, and the response she received can hardly have been very comforting. "Try to get the name of the person behind the ad to whom you sent your photograph with a request to the newspaper delivery office," the advice columnist wrote. "Once you have that, demand your photograph back. You may ultimately have to go to the police."[98] But pictures were not the only problem; picking up the responses to one's own ads often proved difficult, too, as the editors of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* acknowledged in response to a reader letter written by

[97] "Öffentliche Meinung: 'Anonym zwecklos,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 April 1908, Nr. 176.

[98] "Briefkasten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 25 March 1905, Nr. 143.

a woman complaining that someone had picked up all of the responses her ad had generated. "[This kind of thing] is unfortunately a very common occurrence," the editors acknowledged, noting that the delivery office was not required to verify people's identities when picking up responses. Some Berliners had apparently taken to ripping a numbered streetcar ticket in half, including one half with the ad order, and requesting that the delivery office require the person picking up the responses to show the other half – but "this doesn't always help," they admitted.[99] Indeed, the delivery office workers themselves were often dishonest and used their access to names and ads for devious ends, as happened in a 1902 case.[100] Swindlers, as we have seen, used ads, as well, and even those Berliners who were especially cautious about revealing anything about savings and valuables or rendezvousing with the respondents all too often found themselves bamboozled, blackmailed, or, like Emma Schäfer and Frieda Kliem, worse.[101]

Information about Berliners using ads, however it was obtained, was potentially very damaging, especially for those in positions of prominence. Count Paul von Hoensbroech, a writer, public figure, and ex-priest who rose to prominence after a very public exit from the Jesuit order, discovered this painful truth in what was probably the most publicized, sensational case involving personal ads at any time before World War I. Count Von Hoensbroech was namely the defendant in a highly-charged civil case brought by a matchmaker – a Polish man by the name of L. Pokorny – claiming that von Hoensbroech had used his services and then refused

[99] "Öffentliche Meinung: Verfehlte Annoncen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 December 1909, Nr. 800.

[100] In one case, for example, a man who owned a delivery office used his access to ads (and, more importantly, the identity of their authors) to propose to an ad writer (who was desperate to get married) and essentially swindle her of her dowry. "Unerquickliche Heirathsgeschichten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 May 1902, Nr. 213.

[101] Cases of swindlers using personal ads were at least a weekly occurrence in Berlin. See, for example, "Heirathsschwindel und kein Ende," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 October 1900, Nr. 241; "Vom Heirathsschwindler 'Prinzen Antonio, Herzog von Siano,'" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 13 September 1901, Nr. 429; "Ein Heirathsschwindler," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 October 1901, Nr. 505; "Verhaftung eines Heiratsschwindlers," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 31 August 1903, Nr. 406.

to pay. In and of itself, this was hardly front-page news, for matchmakers and their clients were seemingly always in court bickering about whether one had paid or swindled the other. Indeed, Fritz Podszus, the aforementioned owner of Berlin's largest matchmaking service (and publisher of the personal-ad-only newspaper, *Die Heirats-Zeitung / Matrimonial-News*, published in both Berlin and New York), was involved in quite a few court cases at the turn of the century.[102] This case was different, though, because von Hoensbroech had been caught posting a personal ad and then, once the ad was discovered, denied over and over that he had ever used one. Even when both the police and newspapers got a hold of the ad and reprinted it, von Hoensbroech stuck to his story, which sounded less convincing each time he told it. The ad itself, which ran in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in 1894, was not particularly damning, though it is not hard to see how parts of it were perhaps embarrassing:

> **Marriage**. A German cavalier from the high nobility, 40 years old, very distinguished and nice appearance, impeccable past, meager savings but completely free of debt, wishes to marry a rich woman of any confession so long as she has an enlightened religiosity. Any sort of matchmaking – other than by her parents or guardians, is out of the question: anonymous replies will not be considered. Seeker plays a prominent role in political life and is in every way capable of establishing a happy family life. Responses are asked under K. 1687 on the delivery office of this newspaper, Berlin SW. Utmost discreetness is a matter of honor.[103]

Count von Hoensbroech may have been a little too eager to cover up his use of a personal ad (and subversion of the matchmaker he had hired), and, instead of letting the matter fade away, he tried at length to explain it away in ways that only fanned the flames even further. Von Hoensbroech was the head of Berlin's *Tägliche Rundschau*, a relatively small daily newspaper,

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[102] For example, "Der Heiratsagent," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 January 1904, Nr. 31; "Der Heiratsvermittler vor Gericht," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 4 January 1912, Nr. 6.

[103] Newspaper clipping, 9 September 1894, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16230 (Überwachung Paul v. Hoensbroech, Heiratsvermittlungsprozess, 1891-1915).

and he used his editorial power to publish several statements in the paper that repeated his innocence and claimed he could not talk about the case because of reasons "which, as they have to do with my religious past, are subject to my oath of priestly secrecy, which I consider inviolable."[104] When pressed further, von Hoensbroech revealed that he had paid Pokorny a small sum so that he might "just have a little peace" and be rid of the "intrigue" against him, but he continued to stay silent about a variety of embarrassing letters that had been published and which showed him reminding the matchmaker about his various language skills and the fact that he had been given important tasks by the Kaiser himself. "It is not necessary for me to give a statement as to the authenticity or inauthenticity of the letters, and for obvious reasons," he wrote in another piece in the *Tägliche Rundschau*.[105] The case might again have faded away, but von Hoensbroech seemingly could not help himself from commenting on it further and discussed the matter in his memoir (advertised in the *Tägliche Rundschau* as sure to bring new light to the affair), writing that the whole thing had been a set-up, a ploy by the Ultramontanists meant to punish him for leaving the Jesuits and joining the Protestant church.[106] He remained evasive about the personal ad, and while, in a later trial, Pokorny announced he could prove that von Hoensbroech had written the ad himself, the entire case was dismissed because of the statute of limitations.[107] From then on, Count Paul von Hoensbroech slowly faded from prominence, and one of his final flashes of relevance came in a news article reporting on a lecture he gave that had

[104] Newspaper clipping, 2 November 1898, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16230 (Überwachung Paul v. Hoensbroech, Heiratsvermittlungsprozess, 1891-1915).

[105] Newspaper clippings, 7 December 1898; 6 December 1898, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16230 (Überwachung Paul v. Hoensbroech, Heiratsvermittlungsprozess, 1891-1915).

[106] Newspaper clipping, 21 October 1899, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16230 (Überwachung Paul v. Hoensbroech, Heiratsvermittlungsprozess, 1891-1915).

[107] Newspaper clipping, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16230 (Überwachung Paul v. Hoensbroech, Heiratsvermittlungsprozess, 1891-1915).

to be broken up because members of the audience were throwing rotten eggs and beer steins at him.[108]

The von Hoensbroech scandal may have, somewhere along the way, become more about the spectacle itself than the revelation that a prominent Berliner and political friend of the Kaiser had used a personal ad, but the incident nevertheless points to the fact that the use of personal ads – and modern technologies of love, more generally, for von Hoensbroech had used a combination of ads and a matchmaker – carried with it significant risk. Ads, of course, were not breaking any laws (though there were those who continued to compare advertising for love with prostitution), but they brushed up against the boundaries of what respectable, discreet, middle-class Berliners did, no matter how much each ad writer claimed to possess these same qualities in toto.[109] "Looking for a husband or wife with a personal ad," Hans T., a Berlin postal worker wrote in 1911, "is still counted by many as a little indecent." When they told others how they met their spouses, he wrote, users of personal ads generally received "an ironic, somewhat disdainful smile."[110] Indeed, when a man posing as a German lieutenant in his ads was revealed to be nothing more than a swindler, the newspaper remarked that "readers of the ad should have known that a member of our officer corps would never write an ad of this sort."[111] One Berliner observed that, in general, the problem with personal ads was that they had "too much of a business-like character," what with their sterile, "cold words" and stipulations about money.[112]

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[108] Newspaper clipping, 13 March 1902, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16230 (Überwachung Paul v. Hoensbroech, Heiratsvermittlungsprozess, 1891-1915).

[109] Margarete Pick, "Ehen auf Erden," *Geschlecht und Gesellschaft* 1, no. 1 (1906), 569.

[110] "Das Publikum: Die Heiratsannonce," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 April 1911, Nr. 99.

[111] "In der Affäre des Heiratsschwindlers Schiemang," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 January 1904, Nr. 36.

[112] "Das Publikum: Der Weg zur Ehe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 August 1911, Nr. 214.

This was essentially the response of Helene Kuërs's boss, Friedrich, when she suggested that he use personal ads to find a wife. "[He said] these types of finding a wife didn't suit him," she wrote in her diary.[113] Ida Susemaus, the staid, traditional aunt who represents "old Berlin" in Leo Leipziger's *Der Rettungsball* (*The Rescue Ball*, discussed at length in Chapter Two), similarly gets upset when another character jokes that Ida reminds her of someone who would write a personal ad.[114] There was even a hint of unmanliness in writing ads, as we see when Annchen's father tries to marry her off by using a personal ad in the 1910 play, *Die Heiratsannonce* (*The Personal Ad*). His wife chastises him and questions his manliness, saying, "If you were a man, you wouldn't need an ad to get our child married. But you're not one."[115]

Personal ads struck Berliners as an affront to the idea that "marriage is made in heaven," as they so often liked to say, and they clashed with a middle-class idealism that clung firmly to marriages arranged by fate or the traditional means.[116] And yet thousands of men and women used personal ads each month, so there was clearly something about ads that made them worth the risk, worth the cost of flouting that idealism and respectability that was so compelling for most Berliners (after all, as popular as personal ads were, the vast majority of men and women never wrote a single personal ad in their lives). On some level, the use of personal ads was motivated by the same maverick, modern sensibility regarding love and dating as we saw in Chapter Two, where men and women, mostly in their late teens and twenties, embraced fortuitous encounters, sports, dancing, and the work place as legitimate avenues to connection

[113] Helene Kuërs, *Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben* (1954) Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Signatur 11581 II,2, 17.

[114] Leipziger, *Der Rettungsball*, 83.

[115] Kessler and Stein, *Die Heiratsannonce*, 3.

[116] Hans Ringlau, "Gelegenheiten zur Heirat," *Heirats-Zeitung* 30, no. 238 (1914), 1-2.

and intimacy (if not always marriage). Personal ads were, in this sense, yet another modern method that Berliners used because it offered some measure of success – however defined – where traditional approaches did not.

But personal ads were a step beyond the modern approaches of Chapter Two. In fact, they were different in a number of quite revolutionary ways. On one level, gay Berliners found in personal ads a detour around a legal system and a variety of public prejudices that normally made love and dating so difficult. Members of the working class had less of a use for personal ads, for they regularly gathered in Berlin's numerous gay bars.[117] Berlin, in fact, had a lively gay bar scene that was without equal anywhere else in the world, and a handful of sources suggest that these were places where gay Berliners had some semblance of a place where they could be among themselves and mingle without fear of being discovered by authorities.[118] Still, as Magnus Hirschfeld pointed out in a 1904 article, "the vast majority" of gays lived "completely withdrawn, and even those who did attempt to find others (or even take part in a sort of ad-hoc matchmaking service) in the bars, cigarette stores, and private lofts often found those places discovered by authorities and their usefulness thus destroyed.[119]

The beauty of gay personal ads, on the other hand, was that they could be written relatively anonymously and in coded language such that one had a legitimate shot at finding a "likeminded" (as the phrase went) man or woman and avoiding much of the risk associated with semi-public meetings or casual rendezvous in places like the Tiergarten and the *Kaiser-Passage*

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[117] Paul Näcke, "Ein Besuch bei den Homosexuellen in Berlin," in Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht* (1904), ed. Manfred Herzer (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1991), 171-172.

[118] Hirschfeld, "Das Ergebnis der statistischen Untersuchungen," 121; *Das perverse Berlin*, 128-129; *Goodbye to Berlin*, 71; Dobler, *Von andern Ufern*.

[119] Magnus Hirschfeld, "Das Ergebnis der statistischen Untersuchungen über den Prozentsatz der Homosexuellen," 121; *Goodbye to Berlin*, 71.

shopping area. This is not to say that personal ads were completely without risk, for ads that were potentially offensive were, as we saw earlier, investigated by police, who discovered the authors of the ads and charged them accordingly. Gay Berliners were aware of this and took steps to camouflage their ads such that they might blend in to the sea of ads filling the newspapers. Paul Näcke, a Berlin sexual scientist and colleague of the much better known Magnus Hirschfeld, observed as much in his 1902 study of gay personal ads in Berlin newspapers, noting that most said as little as possible that might make them stand out as gay ads.[120] In this, they were actually hardly distinguishable from ads written by straight Berliners, though Näcke noticed that more gay ads mentioned modern activities – bicycling and sports – than was otherwise common. "[They] have to be similar to [the others]," he wrote, "so as not to offend."[121] One did, however, have to leave some clues in his ad so as to find the right partner, and here the term "likeminded" – or "correspondence with likemindeds [*Gleichgesinnten*]" – was most useful, for it had little meaning except to "those in the know [*Kenner*]." Other common terms were "modern," which was at once innocuous and somewhat unique to gay ads, since very few straight ad writers referred to themselves as modern, as well as "lonely" and "energetic." More risky hints included a handful of Latin codes ("Sappho," "Antinous," or "Uranus") and rather overt references to "decadence."[122] We can get a feel for the ads by looking at some of the ads Näcke reprinted:

> "**Looking for a girlfriend**. Young woman, mosaic, 18 years old, from respectable family, who lacks friends, would like to meet a similar young woman […]."

[120] Dr. P. Näcke, "Angebot und Nachfrage von Homosexuellen in Zeitungen," *Archiv für Kriminal-Anthropologie und Kriminalistik* 8, no. 3/4 (1902), 341.

[121] Ibid., 344.

[122] Ibid., 342-343.

> "A man from better circles wishes to meet **a bicycle partner** […]."
>
> "**[Female] Bicyclist**, businesswoman, 25, looking for connection to women for short excursions. Letters under number '69' […]."
>
> "Young, intelligent man looking for [male] **colleague**. Letters requested under 'Lonely' […]."
>
> "**Married**, energetic woman wishes to start friendly interaction with married, well-situated women since husband is often away […]."
>
> "**Decadent, hypermodern naturalist** young man wishes […] to start correspondence with thoughtful, distinguished gentleman. […]."
>
> "**Educated** Christian [woman] (22) looking for interaction with freethinking, debonair women. Letters treated with discretion […]."
>
> "Looking for a **friend**. Intelligent gentleman looking for intelligent, likeminded [male] friend […]."
>
> "**Many-sided**, educated young woman wishes to start correspondence with likemindeds […]."[123]

These, according to Näcke, had been printed in various Berlin newspapers in the 1890s, and he estimated that there were surely hundreds and hundreds more.[124] Of course, there were also gay journals and newsletters – for example, Adolf Brand's literary magazine, *Der Eigene* – that printed ads, as well, and while these ads carried a greater risk since, especially in the case of *Der Eigene*, gay publications were constantly being shut down and censored, they also allowed gay Berliners to be perhaps slightly more specific about the type of partner they wanted to find. This holds up if we look at just two ads from the back of a 1904 issue of *Der Eigene*:

> "Student, from the best circles, raised in the spirit of antiquity, manifold artistic interests, wishes to start a correspondence with a likeminded fellow student. […] Letters under 'Hellas' to the editors of [*Der Eigene*] […]."

[123] Ibid., 340-341.

[124] Ibid., 344.

> Aristocrat, young, belonging to the oldest noble family of Hungary, independent but bound by the free development of his inner nature by social circumstances, inspired by upstanding sympathies and passionate love for the beauty of nature and art, is looking for connection to a likeminded person as a travel partner, friend, secretary, or reader. […]. Letters under 'Byron' to the editors of [*Der Eigene*]. Discretion a matter of honor![125]

On some level, the trouble and risk involved in this relatively safe method of finding gay love highlights a larger truth about how difficult it was to form same-sex relationships at the turn of the century, even in what was surely Europe's most gay-friendly city.[126] Still, given the perils of other methods of meeting other gay men and women, the fact that so many wrote ads speaks to the promise of personal ads as a way to escape the urban isolation that was doubly painful for gay Berliners. Indeed, while working-class Berliners, as we have said, had a number of bars and nightclubs to choose from, ads were really the best remaining option for middle- and upper-class gays, and Näcke confirmed in his study that very few of the ads he analyzed had been written by working-class folk.[127] In fact, it might make sense to consider personal ads as the middle-class equivalent of the gay bar, for not only did authors of ads usually cite their isolation; they also sought not casual sex or fleeting intimacy but long-term, stable relationships, which is precisely what both Hirschfeld and Näcke found in their visits to Berlin's numerous gay bars (the bartender they met, for example, was celebrating the eleven-year anniversary of his engagement to his partner).[128] Personal ads, like Berlin's gay bars, were for gay Berliners thus an advanced,

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[125] Adolf Brand, "Wochenbericht," *Die Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, 9 January 1904.

[126] Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, forthcoming).

[127] Näcke, "Angebot und Nachfrage," 341.

[128] Ibid., 341, 345; Näcke, "Ein Besuch bei den Homosexuellen in Berlin," 171-172.

easier, safer, and much needed method of making connections, and, at the turn of the century, they were beginning a steady climb to popularity.[129]

On another, more fundamental (and revolutionary) level, personal ads, as an emerging technology of love, promised not just a revision of or substitute for the dominant path to love and marriage but a complete reimagining of the entire system of meeting potential partners and making decisions about marriage. For one, they transformed the fortuitous encounter from a chaste fantasy (as we saw in Chapter One), a risky promiscuity (as in Chapter Two), and a marketing tool for matchmakers (as we saw earlier in this chapter) to a relatively straightforward – if still somewhat unlikely – possibility. In other words, the technology of personal ads, combined with their astonishing popularity at the turn of the century, convinced Berliners that they just might be a single ad away from seeing "love at last sight" once again, indeed, from shrinking the massive metropolis and slowing its frenzied pace down to a tempo where strangers might become more than pretty faces passing on the street. This was different than the stylized, newsprint obsession with fortuitous encounters we saw earlier, though, for this particular use of personal ads – making missed connections – never made it onto the front page, into the feuilleton section, or out of the pens of novelists. It stayed, rather, in the columns of the personal ads themselves, which is to say that Berliners simply used them without much ceremony or flourish.

The experiences of the young Fritz Reinert are revealing in this regard, for Fritz was one of the many Berliners who used personal ads to make a missed connection. Fritz came as a teenager to Berlin in 1902 to take in the sights and sounds of the city but also to train as a

[129] Based on my preliminary investigations of personal ads after WWI, it seems that gay personal ads may have peaked in the 1920s, where laws governing censorship and sexuality were significantly less restrictive. In fact, other non-hegemonic sexualities – notably transvestitism – are represented in ads in the 1920s, as well.

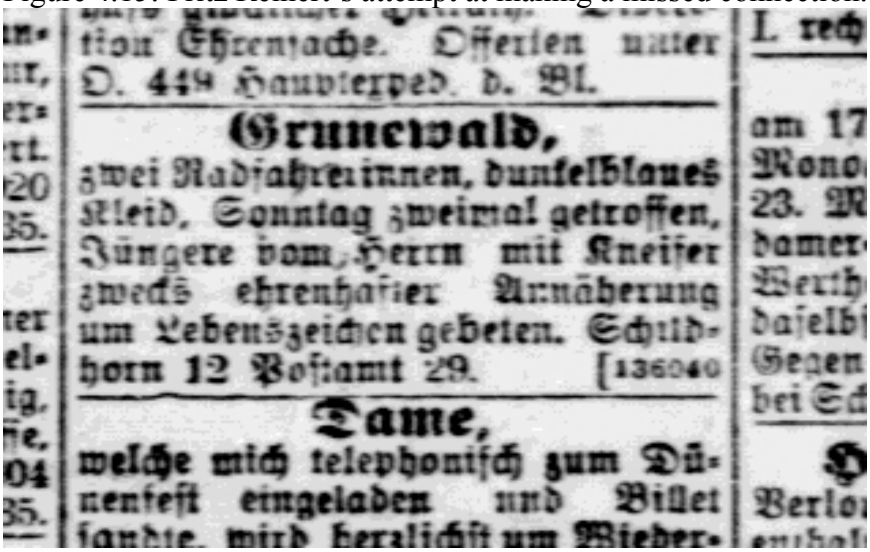
printmaker for a year or so before returning to his native Glogau in far eastern Prussia.[130] When he was not working, Fritz indulged in Berlin's myriad nightlife offerings and nearly always ended his evenings playing billiards with his friend, Otto, at Hering's bar. One Sunday in the late fall of 1902, Fritz and Otto were wandering about the city, enjoying the fine weather (we know this because Otto recorded each day's weather in his diary), when two "exquisitely beautiful" young women passed them on their bicycles as they headed toward the popular Schildhorn area of the Grunewald forest. "We smiled at each other. Otto and I were totally flustered," Fritz wrote in his diary that evening, and when they had climbed to the top of the so-called *Dachberg* hill, they were thrilled to see the two women sitting there, as well. "We sat near them," but it soon grew chilly and the ladies moved to the nearby colonnade where there was less wind. Fritz and Otto eventually got up and walked back to the Grunewald train station, but they quickly realized that they "had fallen in love with the girls. We argued with each other as to why we hadn't sat down with them. We talked about them the rest of the day. Since we will probably never see them again, we were really sad."[131] When he woke up the following morning, his "first thoughts were on the two girls," and Fritz wrote that he was unable to get them out of his head the entire day.[132] So, after work the next day, Fritz went straight to the main office of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* and paid for the following ad:

[130] The fact that we even know about Fritz Reinert is, itself, a rather interesting story. Reinert kept a diary during those teenage years when he was preparing to go to Berlin and then did actually spend a year there, but the diary stops right as he is about to leave Berlin and return home to the provinces. There is no record of what Reinert did with the diary after that, nor is there any indication that he continued to keep a diary after leaving Berlin. What we do know is that, roughly 75 years later, the tenant of an apartment in Duisburg some 350 miles from Berlin found Fritz's diary in his ceiling and eventually gave it to the German Diary Archive (Deutsches Tagebucharchiv).

[131] Fritz Reinert, *Tagebuch 1902-3* (1902-1903), Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Signatur 1929, 53.

[132] Ibid., 54.

Figure 4.15: Fritz Reinert's attempt at making a missed connection.



tion Ehrensache. Offerten unter
O. 448 Hauptexped. d. Bl.

Grunewald,
zwei Radfahrerinnen, dunkelblaues
Kleid, Sonntag zweimal getroffen,
Jüngere vom Herrn mit Kneifer
zwecks ehrenhafter Annäherung
um Lebenszeichen gebeten. Schild-
horn 12 Postamt 29. [136040

Dame,
welche mich telephonisch zum Dü-
nenfest eingeladen und Billet
sandte, wird herzlichst um Wieder-

(Source: *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 19 October 1902, Nr. 491.)

> **Grunewald**, 2 bicycle riders, dark blue dress, met twice on Sunday, the gentleman with the pince-nez asks the younger for a sign of life for the purpose of an honorable meeting. Schildhorn 12 Post Office 29.

Buying the ad "felt a little strange," Fritz wrote that evening. "That little bit of fun cost me 3.70 Mk. I did it mainly for fun and don't really expect any answer."[133]

Imagine, then, Fritz's surprise when, after work the next day, he stopped by Post Office 29 and was told that his ad, "Schildhorn 12," had a response. "I rushed home and read the letter. But what they wrote was very vague and left the first step towards a meeting up to me."[134] Fritz went directly to Hering's bar and found Otto, and, after playing a game of billiards (which was apparently more important than crafting a response to the two women!), "discussed the matter with [him]. He also got a kick out of it. The whole thing is actually rather amusing." A trifle, maybe, but Fritz nevertheless composed a reply early the following morning "and, in it, asked to

[133] Ibid., 55.

[134] Ibid.

meet next Sunday."[135] He spent the next few days waiting for a response but found only disappointment, and, after a few more days, he seemed ready to give up hope. "The two girls from Grunewald still haven't answered and I will probably not receive anything more. I don't like it at all; I'd really like to see or at least talk to them again."[136] And yet he went back to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* a few days later and gave it one last shot. "After much thought, I wanted to try my luck again since I just could not get the bicyclists out of my head":

> **Grunewald**, Schildhorn 12, why no answer, asking for a sign of life. Longing, Post Office 29.[137]

Fritz Reinert never did hear back from the bicyclist in the dark blue dress, and he spent the remainder of his year in Berlin more or less unattached and content to spend his evenings playing billiards and occasionally going to a nightclub or cafés. In early 1903, Fritz was let go from his job with the printmaker and eventually left Berlin.[138] But the brief success he had with a missed-connection-type personal ad is nevertheless remarkable, and it seems entirely possible – likely, even – that the dozens of other Berliners who used ads for similar purposes each week often had as much or more success as young Fritz with his bicyclist.

Of course, the revolutionary nature of personal ads went beyond their usefulness in matching up strangers in the busy metropolis. We need only to listen to the many personal ad proselytes for proof of this, for, to hear them tell it, personal ads completely changed the way love and dating worked in the modern city, and on two levels. For one, "modern" approaches to love at the turn of the century were nearly all alike insofar as they fought back against the giant,

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[135] Ibid., 57.

[136] Ibid., 59.

[137] Ibid., 62.

[138] Ibid., 109.

whirring, anonymous metropolis and sought to, through a variety of methods, make the city smaller, more accessible, and less anonymous. Personal ads were fundamentally different. Instead of working against the size and anonymity of the modern metropolis, personal ads used (or had the potential to use) both of these qualities to the advantage of single Berliners looking for love. In one of the earliest defenses of personal ads, a 1900 feature piece on "Marriage Through the Newspaper" pointed out that personal ads were so groundbreaking because the anonymity of the medium allowed people to be transparent, state exactly what they wanted, what they were like, and where they stood financially – an important consideration for Berliners living in the so-called "struggle for existence." "The anonymity under whose protection these [ads] are written," the author wrote, "makes anything possible." "I can well imagine," he continued, "that people with very particular tastes" are able to find exactly the soul mate they seek. The sheer number of potential romantic interlocutors, in other words, actually made one more likely to find a compatible mate via the personal ads. And the fact that the first contact was written – not among family or friends – removed the necessity of a "personal meeting, which, no matter what, implies a certain moral commitment and makes a later termination of relations embarrassing for both parties." Instead, the meeting-in-writing allowed for a longer, more meaningful thought-exchange and the settling of "all important questions of life," after which an in-person meeting was not only less uncomfortable but also more likely to lead to something with which both people were happy. Personal ads, he concluded, "guarantee a larger freedom of choice" and thus represented a significant improvement over "fortuitous encounters made at parties, in theaters, at balls, etc. or those encounters that are set up by the friendly arrangement of others." And if, he wrote finally, there really are people who are meant for each other even though they might live far away from each other, "it is precisely through the newspaper that they have a real possibility

of coming into contact with one another. So there is a poetry to personal ads, which are said to be so prosaic."[139]

But it was not the fact that personal ads made fate any more attainable or wieldy that made them so transformative, and this was the second level of their radical nature. It was, rather, the realization – the pragmatism, even – that fate and fortuity were unstable and outdated foundations for love in the modern world. As Joachim Werner put it in the introduction to his highly-regarded study of personal ads (a study that ended up putting him in contact with a woman he ultimately married), "We civilized people of the twentieth century leave the matching of two people […] up to chance. Systematic, intentional searching is non-existent or exists only outside the bounds of convention" – a convention based, as another Berliner put it, on a "philistine" morality.[140] And while, Werner continued, in all other parts of life we have organized ourselves, developed systems and schema to structure our lives, "anarchy still reigns supreme in the purely human matters." Werner went on to point out what so many Berliners already knew, namely that "the old convention has failed" and a new one must take its place. Personal ads, he wrote, could do this, could facilitate the "greater breadth" and "deeper content" of the modern, "differentiated individual" of the twentieth century.[141]

In this way and on these levels, personal ads represented not simply an improvement over or tweaking of earlier methods, but rather a wholesale reimagining of how dating and courting might work in a world that Berliners believed had become something totally different than what their parents or grandparents had known. By shifting the focus from trying to harness fate to

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[139] K. S., "Die Ehe durch die Zeitung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 August 1900, Nr. 371.

[140] Werner, *Die Heirats-Annonce*, 7; "Das Publikum: Die Heiratsannonce," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 April 1911, Nr. 99.

[141] Werner, Die Heirats-Annonce, 7-8.

recognizing that fate was an impractical fantasy and attempting instead to accommodate the individual, personal ads were an important step in Berliners' efforts to fit their lives to the modern world. So, too, was the groundbreaking notion that to be modern with respect to love and dating was to work with, not against, the realities of the modern metropolis and create a system that used Berlin's size and anonymity to forge love and intimacy.

Marshall Berman has famously described the response to modernity – modernism – as the "struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world" (which is to say *the modern world*, specifically, for "the tendency of modernity [is] to make all things new").[142] When discussing Baudelaire, specifically, Berman remarks that what made this "first modernist" so insightful about modernism was that he realized – as many in the twentieth century later forgot – that modernism is about, even composed of, the everyday lives of men and women as they "orient [them]selves toward the primary forces of modern life."[143] If we accept Berman's notions about modernity and modernism, we might actually consider personal ads themselves as modernist texts. After all, personal ads were, as we have seen, nothing if not the mundane, everyday attempts of modern men and women to make themselves at home in – not work against – the ultra-modern city in which they lived. Personal ads were not, strictly speaking, solely an expression of what it was like to live in the modern world, but the shape and form of the ads, not to mention the words themselves, were the artistic and textual products of Berliners as they quite self-consciously broke with the past and endeavored to fit their lives to the beats and rhythms of the modern world. Like Baudelaire's "painter of modern life," who sketches moments and preserves their fleetingness, so also was each personal ad a tiny sketch of its author's life. Ads

[142] Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 6, 142, 143.

[143] Ibid., 133, 146, 134.

were *Momentbilder*, snapshots, that, as Andreas Huyssen has suggested with regard to Kracauer and Musil's "metropolitan miniatures," described not simply the isolated present but also both a past and an imagined future.[144] They did so, moreover, in a way that few other cultural documents could. To be sure, few will hang a page of personal ads alongside a painting by Kandinsky; fewer, still, will place a bundle of personal ads on a bookshelf next to the collected works of Franz Kafka; but personal ads, which modern Berliners found so interesting at the turn of the century but have been mostly ignored since, offer a rather unique perspective into the lives of modern men and women as they strove to navigate the modern metropolis on the most intimate of terms – indeed, as they imagined a new future for themselves.

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As the police were in the middle of their investigation of the death of Frieda Kliem, they received an interesting package from a gentleman named H. Krämer. Krämer had never met Frieda Kliem, nor did he have any information about her murder or disappearance.[145] But Krämer was profoundly interested in personal ads, and that passion had gotten him thinking about what he saw as the biggest problem moving forward: the business of ads. Others had already pointed out the perceived incompatibility of marriage and business, and Krämer understood that the idea of buying ads seemed too much like buying love for most Berliners.[146] He knew, too, that it was the financial aspect of ads that motivated swindlers and generated wealth for newspaper publishers. Either way, someone was profiting from ads, and Krämer

[144] Andreas Huyssen, "Modernist Miniatures: Literary Snapshots of Urban Spaces," *PMLA* 122, no. 1 (2007): 27-42; see also Huyssen's lecture, "The Metropolitan Miniature in Kracauer and Musil," 11 September 2013, University of Illinois.

[145] Letter from H. Krämer to police, 26 November 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927.

[146] K. S., "Die Ehe durch die Zeitung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 August 1900, Nr. 371.

apparently started wondering what all of those lines of newsprint added up to. So, in 1913, he undertook a fairly simple study, word for word, of all of the personal ads in just one day in Berlin's three biggest newspapers, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, the *Berliner Morgenpost*, and the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Krämer counted 538 ads composed of almost 10,000 words – words that, of course, cost 15 cents each – and calculated that, in one day, each newspaper brought in between 40,000 and 90,000 Marks, or over 175,000 Marks together. And that was just one Sunday. "If we consider all of the newspapers in Germany, the flood of money from personal ads rises to many million Marks each year," Krämer wrote in the newsletter of an organization he founded, the *Ehe-, Mutterschul-Mission* (*Marriage and Mother Mission*). But Krämer's genius was not in tabulating the riches to be made from personal ads (in fact, many of his calculations were simply wrong) but rather in his idea that not newspapers or private matchmaker publishers like Fritz Podszus but the German state itself should profit from the millions of marks Germans – and especially Berliners – spent on personal ads each year by taking control of personal ads and creating what essentially amounted to a state-run dating service. Herein lay the core of Krämer's idea: swindlers, of course, knew all too well the riches to be pilfered from those looking to marry, and both marriage itself and useful paths to marriage (matchmakers and personal ads) suffered as a result. If, however, the state were to mass-produce compatibility questionnaires, distribute them to all Germans, require, by law, that they fill them out, and then collect the responses in a central database, the entire problem of swindlers – not to mention individuals' fears about asking for help in the search for a spouse – could be eliminated. And the state, as Krämer calculated, would make a tidy profit, to boot. Krämer even had an idea for who could oversee the entire operation: the empress.[147]

[147] Newsletter, "Dies ist der Weg," Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927.

The police filed Krämer's letter and newsletter with the rest of the case files even though it clearly was of no help in their ongoing investigation. Krämer, for his part, realized that his idea was a long shot (though we know he was actually not the first to look to the state for help with love and dating: back in 1907, one Berlin newspaper reader complained that the state, which took care of infants and the elderly, should help out single Berliners by putting on events that might initiate relationships), and his organization and newsletter were essentially his effort – "in the meantime," as he put it – to do what the state might someday want to do.[148] Krämer does not show up again anywhere in the historical record, so it is safe to assume that his rather clever idea never got off the ground, but his interest in using personal ads as the building blocks of something greater, more official, and more public is yet another example of Berliners trying to mesh modern approaches to love and intimacy with the existing framework of middle-class sensibilities. It also suggests just how far personal ads had come in just one or two generations. Indeed, if we situate Krämer's organization – and the widespread popularity of personal ads, more generally – alongside the fact that Berlin's mayor once tried to compel the police censorship office to check each ad either before or after it was published, the astonishing rise of this fundamentally new technology of love becomes even clearer.

Berliners almost universally referred to personal ads at the turn of the century as "this no longer uncommon way" ("*auf diesem nicht mehr ungewöhnlichen Wege*"), and this is a telling phrase. Personal ads, on the one hand, truly had become not just a "no longer uncommon way" but rather a common, "self-evident," as one Berliner put it, method of finding love and intimacy in the modern metropolis – so self-evident, in fact, that they began to blend in seamlessly with

[148] "Öffentliche Meinung: Warum Junggeselle bleiben," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 December 1907, Nr. 659; Newsletter, "Dies ist der Weg," Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927.

other quintessentially modern methods of communication.[149] One newspaper reader described the way he had "advertised" ("*annoncierte*") right in the middle of the turn-of-the-century postcard fad and how he and his future wife corresponded at first using only postcards until they decided to meet in person (and then get married).[150] By the beginning of the twentieth century, personal ads had emerged as a "surrogate" for earlier, trusted methods, and one Berliner after another proclaimed ads as the modern way and wrote letters to the newspapers reminding their fellow readers how many happy personal-ad-couples he knew.[151] Berlin newspapers relayed stories about people receiving dozens, even hundreds of responses to a single ad, and book reviewers gushed about the latest studies and novels that finally gave that "no longer uncommon way" the attention it deserved.[152]

Personal ads – and, to a lesser extent, matchmakers – were thus an important part of the turn-of-the-century city, one as "self-evident," as it were, as streetcars arriving in a four-minute cadence, dance halls that filled up on Sunday afternoons, and the splash of desperate Berliners throwing themselves into the Spree river. They altered the dynamics of love, dating, and courting for gay and straight Berliners alike and attracted the attention of novelists, playwrights, reporters, the police, and, for better or worse, thousands of normal Berliners who, like Frieda Kliem, saw in them the possibility to find love and connection where other methods, both traditional and modern, had failed them.

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[149] "Die Heiratsannonce," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10 December 1908, Nr. 290.

[150] Paul A. Kirstein, "Wie sie sich kennen lernen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 9 November 1902, Nr. 264.

[151] "Die Heiratsannonce," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10 December 1908, Nr. 290; "Öffentliche Meinung: Heiraths-Anzeigen!" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 2 November 1902, Nr. 515.

[152] "Berliner Beobachter," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 September 1905, Nr. 447; Dr. M. A., "Eine Heiratsenquete," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 July 1913, Nr. 380.

And yet as popular as they had become by the beginning of World War I, there is something unmistakably defensive about the abiding tagline of personal ads: *this no longer uncommon way*. This shows, too, in the way those thirty-eight women responded to Paul Kuhnt's personal ad in 1914, for nearly all of them felt compelled to justify their use of ads by calling themselves "mature adults," explaining that they had only resorted to ads because they were widows or without family and thus had no respectable way to get in contact with other men, or otherwise couching their response in such reluctant language – "I would not have anything against getting married again," as one woman wrote – that no one would mistake them for loose, dishonorable women.[153] Personal ads could not shake the tinge of disreputability, their perceived incompatibility with a middle-class respectability based on stability, on predictability, on knowing where one stood and what she could expect out of life. Indeed, folding personal ads in to existing patterns of middle-class life proved exceptionally difficult. This, as we will see in Chapter Five, is what made the atmosphere of the turn of the century – especially with regard to love, dating, and intimacy – so sensational, so fraught with contradiction, and so eager to create narratives about modern life in the modern metropolis. The trial of Frieda Kliem's murderer presented the opportunity to craft another such narrative, and the ultimate product said a lot about gender, the middle class, and the search for love.

[153] Letter from S. Stahl to Adolf Mertens, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1232.

The Modern Defender?

Walter Bahn was still a very young man when he began practicing law, but neither his age nor his choice of clients could prevent him from becoming the most sensational, superstar criminal defense attorney in early twentieth-century Berlin. In fact, it was precisely the clients he chose – not to mention his success in defending them – that propelled him to fame, for while he came from a long line of Bahn-family attorneys (his father was a judge, his grandfather a Berlin district court director and author of a well-known book on theft), taking over the family business, so to speak, was hardly enough to earn one any notoriety in a big city where one day's spectacle was old news as soon as the newspaper editors came up with headline for the next day's sensational story. Bahn was just 29 years old when he took the case of Theodor Berger, the Berlin pimp who brutally raped and murdered 9-year-old Lucie Berlin in 1904. Just two years later, he represented Wilhelm Voigt – better known by his Madame Tussaud's wax figure, Carl Zuckmayer play, and unforgettable moniker, "Der Hauptmann von Köpenick" – who stood trial for rather comically (and brilliantly) impersonating an army officer, commandeering a battalion of real soldiers, taking over the Berlin suburb of Köpenick's city hall, arresting the town mayor and treasurer, and making off with over 4,000 Marks before anyone became wise to the ruse. And if Bahn, whose law office was directly next to Berlin's main criminal court and was, as a 1931 article about Berlin's greatest lawyers put it, "a place of refuge for reprobates of all sorts," needed any additional cases to cement his status as Berlin's premier defense lawyer, he found another in 1910, when he defended Frau von Schönebeck-Weber, who murdered her husband, an

Figure 5.1: Walter Bahn (middle) during a 1932 murder case.

(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin F Rep. 290-02-06, Nr. 167/1.)

army major, in a fit of jealous rage before later being pronounced legally insane and put in a mental institute.[1]

Each case was more fascinating than the next, and, together, these three cases alone represent what were, hands down, the most sensational, publicized criminal trials in turn-of-the-century Berlin. But while Bahn may have made his name in the newspapers by representing these rather infamous Berliners, it was his interest in taking the cases of the downtrodden, the poor, and the broken – in short, those without much of a chance – that earned him the respect of his peers in the legal world. The 1931 article in *Das Kriminal-Magazin* praised Bahn as one of Berlin's "giants of advocacy," a lawyer whose manifold courtroom skills shone particularly bright in the "countless cases in which this people's defender represented the interests of the

[1] Ismar Lachmann, "Die Größen der Berliner Advokatur," *Das Kriminal-Magazin* 29 (August 1931), accessed via http://www.anwaltsgeschichte.de/kriminal-magazin/kriminal-magazin.html.

poor and embattled with an empathetic heart and without regard to external success." "Walter Bahn is an orator of the highest quality," the article continued, "a temperament controlled by a will of purposefulness and quiet, contemplative manliness."[2] Bahn's reputation as the "people's defender" earned the respect of those interested in Berlin's underworld of crime, prostitution, and poverty, too, and he was asked to contribute to Hans Ostwald's fifty-volume chronicle of metropolitan squalor and crime, the *Großstadt-Dokumente* (*Big City Documents*). While his volume, *Meine Klienten* (*My Clients*), discussed only the cases of Berger and Voigt, his reflections in it, not to mention his collaboration with Ostwald, more generally, suggest that he was probably interested in more than just fame and glory. Indeed, Bahn describes in the book's introduction his natural, almost intuitive fascination with criminal defense attorneys and how, as a boy, he "knew no greater pleasure than to sit in the courtroom during sensational trials and follow the battle between defense attorney and state prosecutor […]." "My sympathies were naturally with the defense attorney," Bahn recalls. "I realized instinctively already back then that he is an indispensable monitoring body for the administration of justice."[3] But he is also more than this: "[The defense attorney] stands in constant contact with the people and thus knows better than anyone the struggle for daily bread; [he] knows that one must keep in mind the famous saying, 'to understand is to forgive,' when considering the temptations that come from the difficult struggle for existence." These defendants, he concludes, need solid representation in front of judges who are prejudiced against them.[4]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Walter Bahn, *Meine Klienten: Beiträge zur modernen Inquisition*, vol. 42 of *Großstadt-Dokumente*, ed. Hans Ostwald (Berlin: Verlag von Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1908), 7.

[4] Ibid., 8.

Bahn's description of his motivation for defending Berlin's poor and delinquent is compelling, and it certainly underscores his reputation as Berlin's "people's defender," as it were. Far more relevant and interesting, however, are his comments on criminal justice and the modern world, for it is here that Bahn brushes up against one of the central themes of our discussion of love and intimacy in Berlin: the confrontation between middle-class respectability and the modern world. Bahn writes in the introduction to "My Clients" that while Berlin's judges were "no doubt thinking, objective men who try to discover the truth to the best of their abilities," they nevertheless ran up against the problem of perspective. "But what is truth?," Bahn asks, pointing to the fact that the truth – and, if we extend his point a bit, morality and norms – looks different according to one's perspective and worldview. Just as judges and legal thinkers, for example, once believed in witches and sentenced defendants accordingly, he writes, "[s]o also is our justice system a product of our time, even though it suffers by continuing to drag along a heap of decaying viewpoints."[5] In Bahn's view, a defense attorney is thus "there to bring modern […] viewpoints to bear" on the court, such that those living in the modern world might not be subject to such outdated and prejudicial notions of right and wrong.[6]

Taken at his word, then, Bahn seems at first a legal maverick, a man set on aligning the court to the sensibilities of the modern world and protecting marginalized Berliners from being condemned by conservative, outdated principles of right and wrong, moral and immoral, and respectable and disreputable. Just a few years after his book appeared in print, however, Bahn did something that throws this image into question: he took the case of Paul Kuhnt, the 49-year-

[5] Ibid., 7.

[6] Ibid., 8.

old retired pharmacist charged with the murder of the unmarried user of personal ads, Frieda Kliem.

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Of course, Bahn's choice to defend Paul Kuhnt was, in and of itself, actually wholly consistent with his *modus operandi* as a criminal defense attorney in Berlin. After all, Kuhnt was destitute, his repeated professions of innocence had been ignored by the police, who had held him in jail during the year-long investigation and discovery period, and the case itself was a highly-publicized sensation, even if it paled in comparison to the Berger or Voigt cases. It was, as we will see, rather Bahn's methods, his witnesses, and, more generally, his theory of the case that contrasted so interestingly with the legal ethos he put forward in "My Clients." By shifting the focus from Paul Kuhnt's culpability to Frieda Kliem's respectability, Bahn not only devised a defense strategy that threatened to derail the seemingly straightforward argument of the prosecution; he also redefined the trial in terms of hegemonic femininity, middle-class respectability, and modern approaches to love and intimacy. As such, Kuhnt's trial offers us a fascinating window onto the dynamics of this clash between the values of traditional, middle-class society and Berliners' attempts to find love in the turn-of-the-century metropolis.

Pre-Trial Matters

From the search for the killer, the sting-like capture of Kuhnt, and the colorful characters and revealing evidence discovered to the centrality of personal ads in the case and the presence of a high-profile defense lawyer like Walter Bahn, the criminal trial of Frieda Kliem's murderer had all the makings of a sensational *cause célèbre* on par with the Frau von Schönebeck-Weber, Wilhelm Voigt, and Theodor Berger cases. But, if such a thing is possible, Frieda Kliem was murdered at an unfortunate time, for the initial reports of a body having been found in the

Falkenhagen forest appeared in the newspaper on June 28, 1914, just one day before every newspaper in Berlin – and Europe, if not most of the world – ran the unforgettable headline about the assassination of Archduke (and heir to the Austria-Hungarian throne) Franz Ferdinand.[7] Indeed, while, in the past, normal news stories continued to run alongside momentous and earthshaking national and international news events, the run-up to war in July and August of 1914 was such big news that Berlin's daily newspapers all but ignored the day-to-day happenings on a continent and in a city that, the start of an unprecedented war notwithstanding, continued to exist apart from the decisions of war cabinets and politicians. The local news section of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, for example, completely disappeared at the beginning of the war, and it is remarkable that newspaper editors spent any ink at all covering the discovery of a corpse in a suburban forest. What little about the murder that did appear in the newspapers died out after no clear suspect could be found, and, other than speculating about the "mysterious letter" Frieda had been waiting on and advertising the police's 1,000 Mark reward for her killer, there was not much more to be said.[8] Frieda Kliem, who burst onto the main-stage of Berlin life in those final days of June 1914, was thus just as quickly ushered off to make room for the main attraction of the summer of 1914: world war.

[7] The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* actually printed four short lines of text about the discovery of a woman's body in the forest in its evening edition on June 27th, but the story was cryptic and unconfirmed, at best, and not until the following day did all of the Berlin newspapers run the story of the probable murder. *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 27 June 1914, Nr. 321.

[8] "Auf der Spur eines Frauenmordes," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 28 June 1914, Nr. 322; "Kleine Nachrichten," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 28 June 1914, Nr. 322; "Der Frauenmord in der Falkenhagener Forst," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 June 1914, Nr. 323; "Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. 1000 Mark Belohnung für die Ermittelung des Täters," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 June 1914, Nr. 323; "Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst," *Berliner Morgenpost*, Nr. 175; "Der Frauenmord bei Falkenhagen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 June 1914, Nr. 176.

So it was that Berliners had mostly forgotten about Frieda Kliem when Walter Bahn entered his appearance on behalf of Paul Kuhnt on October 18, 1915.[9] The police investigation had been going on for well over a year at that point, and Kuhnt had spent the entirety of that time in jail. His long detention prompted his wife, Margarethe, to write in more than once to the police and ask when her husband's trial would actually begin. His family needed him, she wrote, not least because her two boys had volunteered (a point she emphasized) for the war and were fighting "in the east."[10] Margarethe also wrote back and forth to her husband and tried to keep him up to date on the state of his defense. Back in December of 1914 – just a few months after his arrest – she wrote to say that she had met with Walter Bahn, who apparently expressed an early interest in the case, and that she was anxious for him to return home. "Each day I wait for your return home," she wrote. "This endless waiting is tiring and dull – that surely shows in my letters. Will to be with us for Christmas? […] [If not, it] will be a day like any other, then, one that must be endured, one that will come to an end. But I can't believe that this could take several more weeks still."[11]

Of course, we know that, like the German soldiers who thought they would celebrate Christmas 1914 in front of the hearth and not the front line, Kuhnt and his wife would be disappointed, for, since the investigation and pre-trial matters were complicated and seem to hit every possible snag, Kuhnt did not make it home by Christmas. There was, for one, the matter of witnesses, and there were many who had something to say about Frieda Kliem. But by the time

[9] Letter from Walter Bahn to police, 18 October 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 8.

[10] Letter from Margarethe Kuhnt to police, 31 October 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 13.

[11] Letter from Margarethe Kuhnt to Paul Kuhnt, 9 December 1914, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 62-63.

witness summons were sent out, many witnesses had conflicting commitments or simply could not be located. Dr. Paul Jeserich, for example, who was the medical expert the state would rely on in establishing Frieda's cause of death, wrote to say that he could not come to Berlin the day of the trial and would send his assistant, Dr. Paul Müller, instead.[12] Ernst Krause, the forester who was the first to find Frieda's corpse, was also unable to come to the trial (though he was allowed to give a deposition).[13] And a variety of other witnesses never even received their witness summons, which the police found out when they received more than a few of them – which had been send via certified mail – marked "return to sender."[14] There were also the numerous witnesses Walter Bahn wanted added to the witness list, and it is here that his strategy for how he would defend Paul Kuhnt starts to become clear. Bahn's first move was to try to establish the respectability and trustworthiness of his client, and to do so he petitioned to add Kuhnt's wife, Margarethe, to the witness list, hoping she, as his abiding wife, might soften the edges of what the prosecution would surely claim was evidence showing Kuhnt to be an adulterous lecher who used personal ads to swindle women.[15] He also made contact with two of Kuhnt's friends – Max Blumensaat and a man named Euschmann – and was apparently convinced that they would serve as useful character witnesses for the defense, knowing Kuhnt as they did to be "a man of honor."[16] Here was an invocation of the oft-bandied about and always amorphous concept of honor, and Bahn was clearly intent on framing his client as a paragon of

[12] Letter from Paul Jeserich to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 36-38.

[13] Deposition, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 32.

[14] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 29-30.

[15] Letter from Walter Bahn to police, 23 November 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 34-35.

[16] Letter from Walter Bahn to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 39.

middle-class virtue and respectability. To this end, he also added Professor Kolbe of the Royal Museum of Natural Sciences in Berlin, who, he claimed, knew both Kuhnt's "personality" and "the scientific importance and work of the defendant."[17] Kuhnt, as it turned out, cultivated an interest in insects and bugs alongside his career as a pharmacist and had even joined two scientific societies – the German Entomological Society and the Berlin Entomological Society – in 1906 and 1910, respectively.[18] At some point, he became the club librarian and later member of the editorial board for the former, and, in addition to his frequent participation in lively debates at society meetings, he even wrote book reviews, contributed articles on various insect types to the society's journal, the *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift*, and, in 1912, published a 1138-page handbook on German beetles that was both well-reviewed and, in subsequent years, frequently cited by other scholars.[19] All of this was character information that Bahn wanted the jury to hear, and it supported – rather impressively – the "honorable" portrait he wanted to paint of Paul Kuhnt.

But playing up Paul Kuhnt's credibility as a respectable, honorable middle-class Berliner was only one half of the expert legal defense Bahn was putting into place. The other half was

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[17] Letter from Walter Bahn to police, 23 November 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 34-35.

[18] "Mitgliederliste," *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* 1 (1911): 9; "Vereinsangelegenheiten I," *Berliner Entomologische Zeitschrift* 55 (1910): i.

[19] Kuhnt is listed as the librarian on many pages of the journal, as, for example, at Paul Kuhnt, "Aus der entomologischen Welt," *Deutsche Entomologische* Zeitschrift 1 (1911): 109. "P. Kuhnt" is listed as a member of the "Redaktionskommission" on the cover page of the 1911 volume of the *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* 1 (1911): cover page. For Kuhnt's participation in society meetings, see Paul Kuhnt, "Aus den Sitzungen," *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* 1 (1911): 100. For one of Kuhnt's reviews, see "Rezensionen und Referate," *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* 1 (1911): 111-112. For one of Kuhnt's articles, see Paul Kuhnt, "Neue *Erotylidae*," *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* 3 (1910): 219-270. For Kuhnt's (well-reviewed) book, see Paul Kuhnt (ed.), *Illustrierte Bestimmungstabellen der Käfer Deutschlands: ein Handbuch zum genauen und leichten Bestimmen aller in Deutschland vorkommenden Käfer* (Stuttgart: E. Schweizerbart'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1913). A Google Scholar search for Kuhnt's handbook suggests that 71 books and articles cite to it, some as recently as the 1990s. And in a rather creepy twist, I discovered that my "home" library at the University of Illinois owns a copy of the book.

even more important, for it was here that Bahn was planning a full-out assault on Frieda Kliem's character, indeed, her own honor and respectability as a middle-class woman. To do so, he requested complete access to the police's copious notes on their investigation into Frieda's past, friends, and personality. This was a smart move, for the police had expended considerable effort interviewing any- and everyone who had anything to say about Frieda – all, of course, hoping to find some clue about who might have had a motive to kill Frieda or, at the very least, been in a position to do so. Bahn waded through the dozens of police statements and focused on five strands of testimony in particular, each one a different color in the portrait he intended to paint of Frieda as a promiscuous, dishonest, and disreputable woman who could have been killed by any one of the former lovers, jealous types, and violent vagabonds who were part of her milieu. The first thread was about Otto Mewes, Frieda's live-in-boyfriend/free-marriage-partner (in other words, her *Verhältnis*) who had left the Berlin-Brandenburg area for warmer climes in southern Europe but nevertheless remained one of Frieda's closest friends. We, of course, remember Mewes from Chapters Two and Three, where we saw Frieda trying to pass Mewes off as her uncle so as to make his overnight stays, his belongings in her apartment, their joint bank account, and their long trips together seem more in line with middle-class respectability. Nearly every one of the friends and neighbors interviewed by the police had something to say about Mewes, and since no one but Frieda and Mewes knew the extent of their intimacy and the witnesses could thus only speak about it in vague, speculative ways, the relationship appeared perhaps more scandalous or indecent than it really was. Mewes himself apparently acknowledged – either to the police or directly to Bahn – that he had "intimate relations" with Frieda, "often spent the night with her," and had a spare key to the apartment.[20] Frieda, of course, had left what little

[20] Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 54-61.

belongings she had to Mewes (and her other friend, Antonie Köhler) in her will, and, upon learning of her death, Mewes apparently felt justified cleaning out their joint bank account; but as suspicious as all of this sounded, no one, not even Bahn, questioned Mewes's alibi that he had been in Switzerland and France in the months before, during, and after Frieda's death. Bahn's interest in playing up Mewes in the trial was thus motivated exclusively by his desire to discredit Frieda and make her seem like a loose, disreputable woman.

The second thread Bahn was intent on following had to do with the many men Frieda's friends and neighbors claimed to have seen around her place both before and after her disappearance. As before, the fact that no one really knew anything concrete about who these men were or why they were there only fed the suspicion Bahn wanted to plant in jurors' minds. Otto Westphal, for example, told investigators that he often saw Frieda on the street or in front of her apartment door with various men. When he asked who they were, Frieda claimed they were her cousins.[21] Her neighbor, Marie Schönemann, gave a similar report, saying that when Frieda had visitors, "it was always cousins […] or uncles," not to mention the tall, lean man she saw peering with a magnifying glass onto her doorbell (someone Frieda also referred to as her relative).[22] Another neighbor, Hulda Sello, said she once saw Frieda with a man on a Sunday afternoon. He was tall and skinny, wore a grey suit, and had a blonde mustache. They were coming from a bicycle ride, she thought, and the man left his bicycle in the courtyard and went with Frieda into her apartment, only to leave ten minutes later holding a roll of fabric.[23] Even Otto Westphal's wife remembered seeing a man in a blue suit go up to Frieda's apartment one

[21] Ibid.

[22] Statement by Marie Schönemann, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 10.

[23] Statement by Hulda Sello, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 11.

afternoon. He was also tall and skinny, only he had a dark mustache and wore eyeglasses.[24] But there were even more curious incidents, too. Another friend told police that she once rang Frieda's doorbell but received no answer even though she could hear a man's voice inside.[25] Otto Seiffert, too, claimed to have heard from Marie Schönemann how she had watched as Frieda, who was walking down the stairs, passed by a man with a goatee walking up the stairs and immediately grew red in the face. As the man passed her, he turned around and said, "Oh, Frau Kliem!," to which Frieda responded by turning around and following him back up the stairs. After a while Frieda came back downstairs and told Marie how the experience had been embarrassing enough that she had wanted to hide.[26] Who were these men? Why were their appearances in and around Frieda's apartment so strange and secretive? There were some who conjectured that Frieda was perhaps renting out a room of her apartment and that this might explain the number of men moving in and out of her living space; but no one could say for sure, and this, of course, only made things seem worse.[27]

It was precisely this uncertainty and lack of information that Bahn wanted to emphasize, and even though his material consisted primarily of scraps and fragments – a man walking up the stairs, another leaving Frieda's apartment with a roll of fabric – that only seemed suspicious in light of the fact that Frieda had been killed, this made no difference and, in fact, only strengthened his point. So it was that hazy, almost entirely uninformed statements like that of the elderly Westphals – "the word is that [Frieda's friend, Antonie Köhler] is a prostitute" – for

[24] Statement by Johanna Westphal, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 12.

[25] Statement by Anna Selka, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-9.

[26] Statement by Otto Seiffert, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 48-49.

[27] Statement by Anna Selka, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-9; Report, 7 July 1914, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 101-103.

which they admitted to having no proof, were particularly useful for the defense.[28] So also were long-shot connections like the statement of Max Jaworr, who ran a manufacturing business of some sort and had once overheard one of his employees – a man named Gutzkowski or Gotzkowski, no one knew for sure – saying that he was going to "his Friedel on Franzstrasse," where he would spend the night. Once again, while it was probably a long shot that "Friedel" was Frieda Kliem (who did live at Franzstrasse 5, though there were at least two Franzstrasses in Berlin), the mere whiff of plausibility served Bahn's purpose of attacking Frieda's credibility as an upstanding woman. The fact, moreover, that Jaworr had given his testimony in the form of a deposition from the battlefields of World War I only further highlighted the contrast between masculine respectability and duty, on the one hand, and feminine promiscuity, on the other.[29]

Then there was the mysterious behavior of Hermann Selka, the belligerent husband of Frieda's friend, Anna. The Selkas' marriage had, as Anna told the police, been "sad from the start," primarily because Hermann was constantly without work and generally preferred to rely on the earnings of his wife. He tried to compel her – first with angry words, then with fists – to let him use her savings (which, at 10,000 Marks, were considerable), and her unwavering refusal led not only to arguments, but also domestic violence from which Anna sought refuge in Frieda Kliem's apartment. The Selkas had namely gotten to know Frieda on their many bicycle rides, though Anna claimed her husband never liked Frieda.[30] But when Anna moved out of their shared apartment for good in April 1914, filed for divorce, and moved in for the meantime with Frieda, Hermann started to show up at Frieda's apartment and ask about his wife, whom he

[28] Report, 7 July 1914, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 101-103.

[29] Deposition, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 144, 151-152.

[30] Statement by Anna Selka, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 8-9.

wanted back. Frieda, Anna remembered, had simply stopped answering the door, so persistent was Hermann Selka, and even after Anna left Berlin altogether, Hermann continued to come by to try to retrieve his wife's things. Frieda told her neighbors that she was afraid of Selka, for he had threatened to go to the police and rough her up the same way he had his wife. Frieda also told them how she felt Selka was stalking her, not least because he often appeared out of nowhere when she was bicycling.[31] Selka, for his part, told the police that he had run into Frieda in early June 1914 while bicycling near the Falkenhagen forest (where Frieda was later killed). The two discussed Anna's whereabouts and then rode back into the city together, whereupon they parted for their separate apartments. One of them – presumably Selka – proposed that they ride again the following Sunday and meet at the same place, but Frieda apparently never showed up. Selka spent the next few days asking about Frieda around her apartment, and when her neighbors confirmed that she had disappeared, he made the odd comment that she was likely lying dead up in her apartment.[32] He also paid an unexpected visit over the lunch hour to Robert Adam, their mutual friend from the bicycle rides. Selka apparently asked him where his wife, Anna, had escaped to, and when Robert lied and said he did not know, Selka responded suddenly, "Have you heard the latest? Miss Kliem has disappeared. She was surely lured into the forest and is now dead." "I told him he was crazy," Robert recalled, but "as I [later] read about Kliem's murder, it occurred to me that Selka had referred to the probability of her having been murdered."[33] Around that same time, Selka also went to the police and filed a missing person report, though the neighbors figured he did this only as a way to get a peek inside Frieda's

[31] Statement by Otto Westphal, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 5-7.

[32] Statement by Hermann Selka, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 18-21.

[33] Statement by Robert Adam, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 76-77.

apartment and retrieve some of his wife's belongings. For all of this, the police had naturally been quite interested in Selka as a murder suspect, especially after the mailman claimed a man had approached him about Frieda's mail and, when told she had disappeared, remarked off-handedly, "Well, she's for sure not coming back."[34] The mailman could not identify Selka as the man who said this, but there was nevertheless enough suspicion surrounding Selka that this line of testimony – from both Selka and the other witnesses – undoubtedly influenced the jury as they formed an opinion of Frieda Kliem and her shady circle of acquaintances.

The final thread of testimony Bahn was intent on highlighting in the trial had to do with a comment Otto Mewes made to the police in a letter he sent them just a few weeks after Frieda's murder. Mewes, presumably fearful that he would somehow become a suspect, was explaining his relationship with Frieda and detailing the items he had received from her recently. Frieda had sent Mewes a letter the day before her disappearance and included a variety of items that seemed odd in light of her subsequent death, most notably a birthday present for Mewes (even though his birthday was at that point still two months away) and a variety of family papers, which, as Mewes put it, "even [Frieda's closest friend] Frau Köhler couldn't understand." Mewes was not sure what to make of the letters, and he wrote to police that "if the conclusion of the doctors were not so strongly indicative of murder, one might think instead of a suicide, especially since she often told me that she thought about sticking the gas hose [from the stove] in her mouth and putting an end to her difficult existence."[35] This did not fit with the reports of Frieda's other friends, who all said they had never seen any indication that Frieda might be suicidal, and the

[34] Report, 7 July 1914, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 101-103.

[35] Letter from Otto Mewes to police, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 95.

police apparently put little stock in the idea.[36] But Walter Bahn no doubt raised the question of a possible suicide not only to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of the jurors, but also, again, to cast Frieda in an unflattering light. After all, while suicide – especially by poor, single women – was exceedingly common in Berlin at the turn of the century (as we saw in Chapter One), it naturally carried a stigma of shame, a lack of fortitude and character, and a sort of vague criminality.[37] It was, in other words, just one more chink in the armor of Frieda's respectability and honor, one more reason a solid, middle-class Berliner like Paul Kuhnt could hardly have had anything to do with her.

Respectability on Trial

When Paul Kuhnt entered the courtroom on November 25, 1915, he did so with Walter Bahn and his carefully designed defense strategy at his side. These reasons for confidence notwithstanding, however, the state had, during his thirteen months in jail, discovered a few additional details about his life that might have made him – and his counsel – a bit uneasy. For one, the police had used that time to put Kuhnt's alibi to the test, and they found it to be full of holes. Kuhnt claimed that he had been in Leipzig on the day of the murder in order to meet with a publisher about his zoological publications, and he offered as proof the claim that he had been in a particular bakery at a particular time of the day to buy a cheesecake to take back to his family in Berlin.[38] The Leipzig police could find no record of Kuhnt's visit, however, and Kuhnt had been unable to produce as much as a train ticket or hotel bill (or a half-eaten cheesecake, for

[36] Statement by Otto Westphal, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1425, Bl. 5-7; Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

[37] Föllmer, "Suicide and Crisis."

[38] "Der Frauenmord bei Finkenkrug. Die neue Gerichtsverhandlung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 March 1916, Nr. 128.

that matter).[39] Kuhnt's response was that he had traveled to Leipzig under a false name, and, in this, Kuhnt found himself trapped in a larger lie about his identity. Kuhnt admitted to having altered the name on his birth certificate to "Kalinder," and while this gave his alibi a small shot at believability (for the police had searched Leipzig for any records under the name Kuhnt, not Kalinder), it also raised important questions about whether Kuhnt was perhaps living a "double life" – a near certainty considering his relationship with Anna Piegors (to whom he had presented himself as unmarried) and his use of personal ads as a married man.[40] The police had also had time to probe into Kuhnt's employment and financial history, and their findings there were equally damning to Kuhnt's credibility. Kuhnt had always stated that he was a retired pharmacist, but this, too, was revealed to be only partially true, as a check with the German Pharmacists' Society suggested. Kuhnt, in fact, had no training as a pharmacist and had simply purchased a pharmacy and then kept his lack of credentials and expertise hidden.[41] And while Kuhnt had sold the pharmacy store at some point and lived off of the rent he received as the building owner, various letters to the court showed that he had a staggering number of outstanding debts to doctors in and around Berlin, and a telegram from a creditor to the police confirmed that Kuhnt was even trying to borrow against his existing debts.[42]

Between his escapades under the name "Kalinder," the outstanding debts, and the shaky alibi, Kuhnt's credibility as a man of scientific importance and middle-class respectability were

[39] Written charge against Paul Kuhnt, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 4-7.

[40] "Der Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. Ein Rentier unter Anklage," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 25 November 1915, Nr. 603.

[41] Letter from Deutsche Apotheker-Verein, 26 November 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 119.

[42] "Der Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. Ein Rentier unter Anklage," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 25 November 1915, Nr. 603; "Der Frauenmord bei Finkenkrug," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 March 1916, Nr. 127; Letter to police, 26 November 1915, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 64.

crumbling to pieces as the trial began, and while there is no official record of the actual court proceedings, the daily newspapers allow us to listen in on what was said, for their reporters were naturally present at the trial, and they published a selection of the testimony so Berliners would not miss any details. Already before the twelve-member jury was selected and the witnesses sworn in, the chief judge, who was allowed to question the defendant directly, launched an attack on Kuhnt's flimsy explanations for his proximity to the world of Frieda Kliem. He began with the simple but important question of whether Kuhnt knew Frieda Kliem:

> **Kuhnt**: I don't know her at all.
>
> **Chief Judge**: But there is very compelling evidence that you do. You have already been caught telling various lies, and if you defend yourself dishonestly and untruthfully, it might make an unfavorable impression on the jury. This whole case is already full of mysteries. You have lived a sort of double life; you now have the opportunity to give an explanation for things, and I urge you to stick to the truth.

The judge then questioned Kuhnt about his finances, whereupon Kuhnt explained that his father was extremely wealthy and had helped him buy his pharmacy on Bülowstrasse. But he also earned money of his own, for example the royalties from his scientific publications, which amounted to 2,000 Marks per year. This was admittedly a lot of money, but the judge suspected that it had not been enough for Kuhnt and that his use of personal ads was financially motivated:

> **Chief Judge**: It is rather curious that you used a false name to post newspaper personal ads and look for marriage opportunities, isn't it?
>
> **Kuhnt**: I cannot deny that.
>
> **Chief Judge**: Your marriage ad read: "*Senior teacher, Dr., widower, no children, 51 yrs., looking for spouse*." You received a lot of responses to this ad. What did you plan to do with this ad?
>
> **Kuhnt**: I wanted to meet women so I could write a novel. These kinds of encounters always make women tell about their experiences.

Chief Judge: That is hardly believable. You recently lost a lot of your savings; couldn't the thought of making some money have motivated your decision to write personal ads?

Kuhnt: No, not at all.

Chief Judge: So it was completely harmless? Did you tell anyone about this completely harmless plan, perhaps your wife?

Kuhnt: No, my wife would have laughed at me if I had told her I was writing a novel.

The judge then asked Kuhnt why he had used a false name and tried to forge his birth certificate, to which Kuhnt replied that he thought personal ads were not anonymous and that one had to show proof of identity to pick up the responses. And he continued to deny that money had anything to do with his use of ads:

Chief Judge: So you met Frieda Kliem this way?

Kuhnt: I am sure I did not.

Chief Judge: Think carefully before answering. This answer in particular could have serious implications.

Kuhnt: No, I don't know Kliem.

Chief Judge: Kliem was an older [single] woman who lived alone on Franzstrasse. Just like you, she posted personal ads. A piece of writing that was found at her place is signed by Adolf Mertens and was most certainly written in your hand.[43]

Surely this would trip up Paul Kuhnt, for the writing was clearly identical, as the court handwriting expert himself confirmed.[44] But Kuhnt was well coached by his attorney, Walter Bahn, and found a way to wriggle around the state's clearest link between Paul Kuhnt and Frieda Kliem:

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[43] "Der Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. Ein Rentier unter Anklage," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 25 November 1915, Nr. 603.

[44] "Der Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. Unterbrechung der Schwurgerichtsverhandlung," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 26 November 1915, Nr. 604.

> **Kuhnt**: [after being shown the piece of writing] It is very similar to my handwriting; but I have never used the name Adolf Mertens.
>
> **Chief Judge**: The writing is quite obviously yours; you cannot contest that!

But Kuhnt was unwavering in his claims to know neither Frieda Kliem nor Adolf Mertens, and the judge, presumably exasperated at Kuhnt's steadfast denial of apparent and obvious facts, moved on to the matter of what he called Kuhnt's "double life":

> **Chief Judge**: It is a very strange thing indeed that you traveled to Leipzig using a false name. You are leading a double life; you undertake odd things under a false name; anyone can see it: there is clearly something going on here.

Kuhnt, as the *Berliner Tageblatt* reporter put it, once again "gave a convoluted answer that the chief judge again called completely unintelligible." So, too, was Kuhnt's claim to have forgotten about Kliem's silverware and other valuables, which he "found" in a commuter train and then put in a hiding place in his home.

> **Chief Judge**: Didn't you tell anyone at home about this strange find?
>
> **Kuhnt**: No.
>
> **Chief Judge**: That is also very remarkable. Didn't you feel obligated to take the packet to the station manager or the police? That would have been the simplest and most natural thing to do. A man in your position, your education, a married father with grown children does exactly that.
>
> **Kuhnt**: I can't explain it either.

This was where Kuhnt started to give some answers, though, presumably only because Bahn had told him not to fight the charge of theft. Kuhnt admitted that, around the time of the Anna Piegors/bank incident, he had fallen on hard financial times because his rental income had dropped off due to the war. He was worried that he would not be able to pay his mortgage, and he suddenly thought of the bankbook he had found. He figured the bank account would be frozen, but he planned to have a girl he knew present herself as Frieda Kliem, thereby convincing

the bank that the account should be unfrozen and that the balance of the account should be paid out.[45]

Kuhnt, at this point, had apparently admitted as much as he intended to, and the remainder of the morning found him denying having heard about Frieda's death or seen the reward posters, acting strange when arrested, trying to commit suicide on the way to the police station, and even being in Berlin on the day of the murder. The chief judge again pointed to the gaps in Kuhnt's Leipzig alibi, and with that the morning session of the trial was concluded.[46] The chief judge's interest in poking holes in Kuhnt's story and credibility, however, was not, and the afternoon session began with the topic of how Kuhnt had met Anna Piegors on the street and initiated an intimate relationship with her.[47] Here, again, was the fortuitous street encounter that, as we saw in Chapter One, so fascinated Berliners, and its role in the chief judge's questioning of Kuhnt only reinforces the point that, for respectable, middle-class Berliners, the street encounter was a look-with-your-eyes-not-with-your-hands kind of thing (though doubly so here, since Kuhnt was married, after all). Paul Kuhnt had done more than look or fantasize about fortuitous encounters on busy streets, and the intimacy he enjoyed as a result of it proved damaging to his character.

But Walter Bahn was a seasoned defense attorney, and he took the opportunity to reemphasize Kuhnt's scientific credentials before pulling a trick out of his sleeve and reminding the jury of the uncertainty surrounding the discovery of Frieda's body. Because over a week had

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[45] "Der Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. Ein Rentier unter Anklage," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 25 November 1915, Nr. 603.

[46] Ibid.

[47] "Der Frauenmord im Falkenhagener Forst. Ein Rentier unter Anklage," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 25 November 1915, Nr. 603.

passed between her death and the forester's discovery of her body, ascertaining a cause of death had been exceedingly difficult, and, based on what was available for forensic examination, one might have classified the death as a suicide if there had not been so many other leads as to a probable murder. The medical experts admitted that they could not rule out a natural death, and while, absent any evidence of deadly blunt trauma to the body, poisoning was probably the most likely cause of death, they had been unable to recover any traces of poison. In light of this fact, as Bahn pointed out to the jury, the state attorney had initially been prepared to drop the murder charges against Kuhnt and proceed only with the charges of theft. This was, of course, a bombshell, for it highlighted uncertainty about the very core facts of the case, and Bahn, aware that this was his best chance of an acquittal, stated for the record that he reserved the right to call the state attorney himself as a witness to this fact at some point in the trial. Of course, there was no getting around the fact that Kuhnt possessed various poisons – including a small quantity of cyanide, which Dr. Jeserich, the court chemist, suggested might have been strong enough to kill Frieda without leaving any trace elements – as part of his zoological and entomological studies, and the chief judge took pains to bring this to the attention of the jury. But Bahn no doubt saw this as acceptable collateral damage given the larger revelation it allowed him to bring to light.[48]

The remainder of the afternoon was spent discussing Kuhnt's shaky alibi, his claims to have found Frieda's valuables in the commuter train, and the basic details of Frieda's circle of friends and potential love interests. Bahn also put Kuhnt's wife, Margarethe, on the stand, where she offered up her own confirmation of her husband's alibi and, more importantly, testified to his respectability as a married father of five. The session ended with Bahn's request for three additional witnesses (among others, Otto Mewes) to be called, a request that the court granted.

[48] Ibid.

Since Bahn's proposed witnesses did not live in Berlin, the court decided to take Friday off and resume the case on Saturday.[49] This would prove unnecessary, for the witnesses apparently could not be located, and the chief judge was then left to decide whether the trial should perhaps be postponed until they could be found. The state attorney rather surprisingly argued in favor of this, reasoning that the court and jury needed to consider all of the important evidence before deciding on a verdict. Bahn, for his part, requested only that his client be released from jail in the meantime since he had been locked up for over a year and could hardly endure another delay. The chief judge ultimately decided in favor of continuing the trial at a later date, but not before some harsh words to the defendant:

> **Chief Judge**: [to Kuhnt] You cannot simply dismiss the fact that there is very compelling evidence against you. You are clearly trying to hide something; can you not shed some light on this darkness?
>
> **Kuhnt**: As far as the murder goes, I have nothing to hide. I can only repeat that I did not know Kliem.
>
> **Chief Judge**: But this assertion is very improbable. Can you really not explain any of this?
>
> **Kuhnt**: The claim is that it is suspicious that a piece of paper was found in Kliem's apartment with the words "Mertens, you will marry me". This can be explained, as has been proven, by the fact that Kliem had an oracle book and got these words from it.

It is unclear what Kuhnt was referring to here when he suggested that it had somehow been proven that Frieda had conjured the name "Adolf Mertens" from some sort of occult power, and why Bahn coached his client to make this assertion is also confounding. The chief judge, though, was apparently willing to play along with this absurd notion, perhaps attempting to prove Kuhnt wrong even in his own fantasy:

[49] Ibid.

> **Chief Judge**: But she still would have to have known Mertens since she was in contact with him. Defendant, I would like to give you the opportunity to come clean.

At this point, Walter Bahn stepped in and shifted the discussion to a new topic before Kuhnt could dig an even deeper hole:

> **Bahn**: I disagree with His Honor's assertion. There are no compelling theories of the murder, not least because we don't even know the cause of death.

Bahn's tactic was clearly successful, for members of the jury then asked Kuhnt to describe exactly how he had found Frieda's valuables in the commuter train – a line of questioning that missed the larger point of Kuhnt's obvious guilt for the smaller, minute details of how he found the valuables and to which authorities he might have reported them missing. Bahn, a genius at spinning questions of character and respectability, was even able to turn a potential negative – Kuhnt's decision to keep the valuables instead of turning them in as lost – into a positive, asserting as he did that his client, as a "scientifically educated man from a good family," must have had a "bad conscience" from having stolen the items and thus hid them away (and forgot about them) because he was so ashamed of what he had done in an "unfortunate" moment of weakness.[50]

Kuhnt, as it turned out, would have quite a while to savor his attorney's impressive rhetorical feat, for the court denied his request to be released from prison during the trial recess, and it was almost five months before he entered the courtroom again.[51] In the meantime, the court paid the original witnesses for their time, and Otto Mewes made his way from Switzerland up to Berlin for the trial, though not before writing the police to see if he might instead give a deposition from afar so as not to aggravate what he referred to as his respiratory problems. The

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

police, of course, denied this request, but they did agree to send him – per his insistence – the train fare for his journey (which, as he characteristically complained in yet another letter to the police, had not been enough because of tiny fluctuations in the Mark-Swiss Franc exchange rate; there was also the cost of the telegrams to Berlin, not to mention the cost of traveling to the telegram office to send and receive them).[52] Antonie Köhler, who was not only Frieda's best friend but also the third member of the Kliem-Mewes-Köhler traveling and bicycling trio, also traveled to Berlin to serve as a witness, and Walter Bahn seemed particularly interested in her testimony about Frieda's desperation to find a husband, for it offered him yet another chance to impugn Frieda's character and respectability.

As the trial began anew on March 9, 1916 (a full twenty months after Frieda's murder), it did so with a new state attorney at the helm, for the original attorney – Fuhrmann – had been called to the front of World War I. He was replaced by state attorney Gerhard Mix, who was no doubt thrilled to see one of Walter Bahn's new witnesses, Kuhnt's own father, dismissed because he told the court he had nothing to say about the matter, having more or less disowned his son after the arrest in October 1914. In some ways, this set the tone for the rest of the first day of the new trial, for the November session had been rather exhaustive, and, as Kuhnt took the stand once again, there was little new to be said or asked. Of interest was Kuhnt's admission to having used matchmaking services in addition to personal ads – also, as he claimed, as a means to gather material for his novel. The chief judge once again questioned Kuhnt's stated intent in this "stupidity" (Kuhnt's words), arguing that, in the dozens of responses Kuhnt received, there was not a single "atom" of material for novels or fiction. If his intent really had been to find material for his novel, the chief judge continued, Kuhnt would have realized that this method was useless

[52] Letter from Otto Mewes to police, 13 March 1916, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 274.

and stopped. Instead, and as Kuhnt admitted, he met with at least two women who had responded. Kuhnt continued to deny having ever met or corresponded with Frieda Kliem, though, and the rest of the day's questioning never emerged from the tangled web of details about where he found Frieda's valuables, what he claimed to have done in Leipzig on the day of the murder, and how he decided to drain her account when he fell into financial difficulty.[53]

The next morning followed a similarly unremarkable pattern, though it was here that Bahn, whose client was, at least for the moment, off the witness stand, really honed in on the strongest arguments for his client's innocence (or, more accurately, doubt as to his guilt). Bahn first sought to establish the point that Kuhnt was not actually in financial trouble around the time of the murder, and here Kuhnt's rather significant earnings from his scientific publications served as useful proof, for they underscored again his credibility as a respectable man of science. Bahn then turned to what remained the most significant hole in the state's theory of the case – the cause of death – and drove home the point that, absent a clear cause of death, any discussion of a murder (and, more importantly, a murderer) was based solely on speculation and uncertainties. The medical experts called as witnesses admitted that one could at most speak in terms of possibilities and probabilities, and to this end they suggested that there were three possible theories: death by poisoning, death by choking, and death by violent, bloody trauma. They were in agreement that these last two were the least likely, and while there were, as we know, no traces of poison found in Frieda's body, the deputy court chemist did point out that this did not by any means rule out poisoning as a cause of death. Bahn, careful not to let this line of questioning end in such a way, was clever enough to get the witnesses to agree to the possibility of a natural death (by heart attack) before allowing the court to turn to a different topic.

[53] "Der Frauenmord bei Finkenkrug," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 March 1916, Nr. 127.

Unfortunately for him, that happened to be the not-insignificant matter of the cards and letters found in Frieda's apartment and bearing Kuhnt's handwriting, and Kuhnt eventually admitted to having written them but claimed he must have forgotten. In any case, he said, Frieda may have been one of the many women with whom he corresponded, but he never met her personally.[54]

The trial resumed after a midday break, and Bahn turned his attention to the fact that both Frieda's neighbors and the police were initially considering several other men as possible suspects. The most important of these was perhaps Otto Mewes, who, as a known lover of Frieda Kliem, had long been the police's (and later Bahn's and the newspapers') greatest interest. Mewes was characteristically (and, for those who believed in Kuhnt's guilt, helpfully) frustrating, however, and Bahn was unable to get anything particularly useful out of his testimony. Mewes did admit that Frieda had spoken of suicide, but he also pointed out that she loved life (especially bicycling and music) and was fit and healthy, thereby throwing into serious question the possibility of death by natural causes. Bahn's questioning of Mewes, Frieda's neighbors, and her best friend, Antonie Köhler, was far from disappointing, however, for it allowed him to drudge up the colorful story of Frieda's attempt to find love by any means necessary (from casual dating to personal ads to whatever connection she had with the mysterious-but-unconfirmed "other" men seen around her apartment). It was on this note that the questioning of witnesses ended for good, and the court took a short recess before starting closing arguments.[55]

Walter Bahn actually had the final say, but by the time the state attorney finished his closing statement, there was frankly little Bahn needed to do. In what was without a doubt the

[54] "Der Frauenmord bei Finkenkrug. Die neue Gerichtsverhandlung," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 10 March 1916, Nr. 128.

[55] Ibid; "Das Urteil im Frauenmordprozeß," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 11 March 1916, Nr. 130.

most shocking, unbelievable twist in both the investigation and trial, state attorney Gerhard Mix asked the jury to find Kuhnt guilty of *only* theft and not murder. To be sure, there was plenty of evidence against Kuhnt, and Mix spent the majority of his closing argument discussing it, reminding the jury that a suicide was unlikely if not impossible, as was a natural death; that Frieda was killed not by a random passerby but by someone she knew and was in contact with through her personal ads; and that Kuhnt was clearly leading a double life, had posted personal ads, was having financial trouble, had been in correspondence with Frieda, was found to be in possession of her valuables, and acted suspiciously when arrested. Taken together, this was extremely compelling evidence for jurists, he said, and even more so for lay people; but he could not recommend to the jury that they find Paul Kuhnt guilty of murder.[56]

On some level, the fact that Mix's colleague in the state attorney's office had originally asked to withdraw the charge of murder against Kuhnt makes this rather astonishing turn of events slightly less surprising. On another, more reasonable level, however, the state *had* ultimately decided to charge Kuhnt with the murder, after all, and had expended considerable effort preparing for the trial, and it is hard to see what happened during the trial that could have convinced Mix (or Fuhrmann) to drop the murder charge for good at the last second. Indeed, by all accounts, the trial had gone well for the prosecution. It is impossible to know what the thought process was behind this decision, and it seems equally hard to even guess at the state attorney's reasoning for putting together a solid case, trying it twice (or once with a lot of repetition), and then, when a guilty verdict was, in all likelihood, just moments away, ask the jury to convict Kuhnt of only the most obvious – and completely uncontested – charge of theft. In fact, this sudden change of heart is so baffling that one is left to wonder if the change in state

[56] Ibid.

attorney from Fuhrmann to Mix might have had something to do with it. Perhaps Mix had never believed in Kuhnt's guilt and had tried to persuade Fuhrmann (successfully, at first) to drop the murder charges. Or maybe he, too, had been convinced by Bahn that the case was not about Kuhnt's guilt – which even the chief judge clearly considered to be self-evident – but rather about the mysteries and uncertainties surrounding Frieda's allegedly questionable and disreputable behavior.

Whatever the motivation, reasoning, conspiracy, or (for Kuhnt) pure luck, when Walter Bahn stood up to give his closing argument, his job as the defense attorney was done, and he used this last opportunity to address the jury to put the trial into the context of his lengthy and storied legal career, pointing out that he had never in his life seen such a convoluted and mysterious case. Everything was in a sort of fog, he said. Wherever one grasped he found not a sturdy grip but only a gelatinous mass. There were, he admitted, suspicious facts against his client, but none of these had, under closer inspection, held up and proven that Paul Kuhnt had anything to do with this terrible murder. The jury must only, Bahn concluded, find the defendant guilty of theft.[57]

Bahn had no need to refer once again to his client's sterling reputation as a middle-class, family man of science, nor was there any sense in reminding the jury of Frieda's ostensibly "loose" lifestyle and unsavory friends. He had frankly done plenty of that during the trial, and in any case it did not matter now. What he did do, however, was advise Kuhnt to make one final statement to the jury before they began deliberating. Whether these were rehearsed words written by Bahn or spontaneous thoughts of Kuhnt himself, we cannot know; but they fit so perfectly with Bahn's entire defense strategy that it is not hard to guess. Paul Kuhnt, addressing the jury

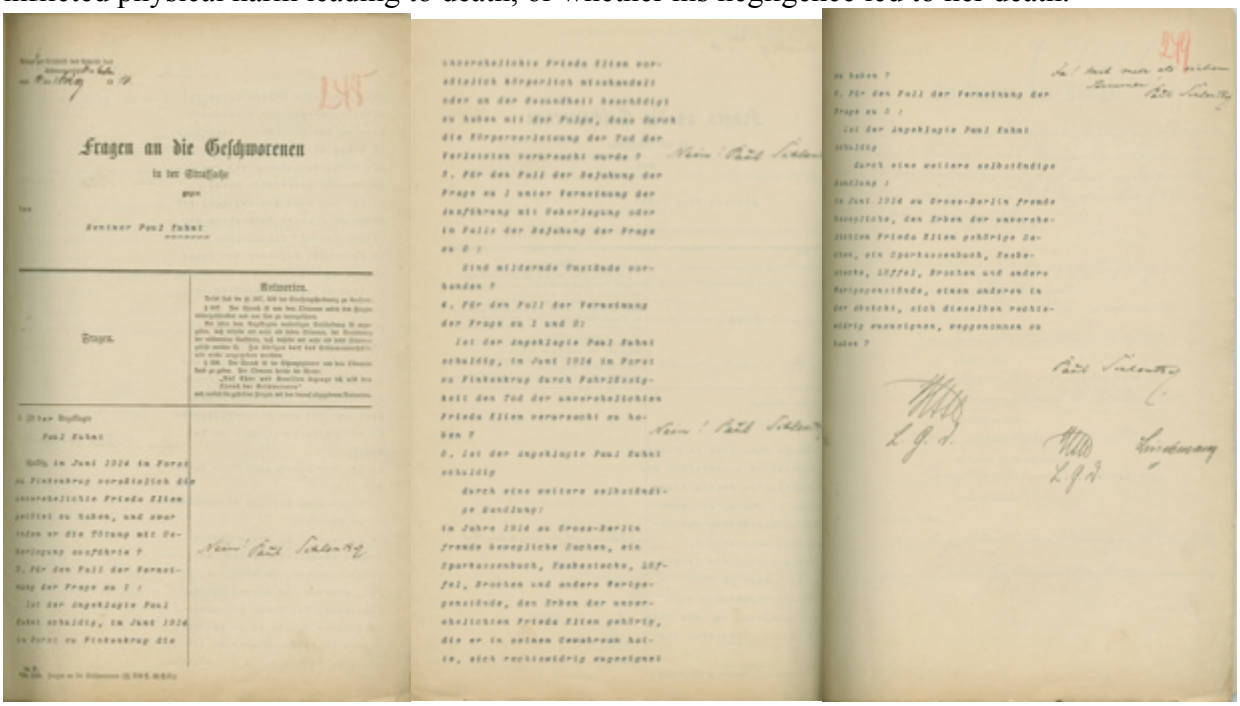
[57] Ibid.

for the last time, appealed to them, as he put it, to restore his family's "honest name." He was not, he said, "such a monster" that he could have ever committed murder.[58]

Here, one final time, was what had become the central theme of the entire case. More than anything else, this case was about respectability, character, reliability, and stability. To be sure, when the jury left the courtroom to deliberate, their ultimate product would be a verdict form indicating their decision about whether Paul Kuhnt was guilty of the murder of the 39-year-old seamstress, Frieda Kliem. What they were actually debating behind those doors, however, and, for that matter, what they heard throughout the entire trial, was, at its core, something much more abstract, idealized, and imaginary; it was about the conflict between middle-class respectability and the modern world that threatened to destabilize it with its individualistic ethos and non-traditional methods for finding love. During the trial, the questioning and evidence mapped vaguely onto the facts and theories of the case, but what each side kept returning to was the question of the two protagonists' credibility as respectable, middle-class Berliners. Bahn had pushed his point hard, emphasizing time and again the ways in which Paul Kuhnt checked the boxes of traditional respectability as a family man, a scholar, and an honorable member of his many societies and social circles. Frieda, on the other hand, had failed repeatedly to conform to the world of tradition and refused to embrace grandfather and grandmother's way, and her casual dating, her personal ads, indeed, the very fact that she loved bicycling and did so with unmarried friends and lovers alike – these marked her as a modern woman, an unstable, unpredictable, dishonorable old maid who certainly did not deserve the sad fate she ultimately received, but who also did not deserve the benefit of the doubt over an established family man whose lines

[58] Ibid.

Figure 5.2: The verdict form, signed by the jury foreman, indicating the jury's responses – "Nein" – to the questions of whether Kuhnt was guilty of premeditated murder, of having inflicted physical harm leading to death, or whether his negligence led to her death.



Fragen an die Geschworenen

(Source: Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 927, Bl. 248-249.)

were shaky, his story full of holes, and whose own parents had disowned him, but who was, at the end of the day, a decent, straightforward Berliner who fit closely enough to the ideals of middle-class comportment.

The daily newspapers, which had followed the case so closely, recorded with a telling lack of fanfare and surprise the announcement that the jury had returned a verdict of not guilty on the murder charge. As expected, the jury found Kuhnt guilty of theft, which carried a jail sentence of six months. Kuhnt had, of course, spent almost three times that sentence in jail while awaiting trial, so he was promptly released from custody and sent back to his wife, Margarethe, and five children, two of whom, as Bahn had reminded the court throughout the trial, were battling valorously for the German fatherland.[59]

[59] Ibid.

Masks and Hidden Identities

The trial of Paul Kuhnt may not have brought any justice for Frieda Kliem (in fact, it seems to have been a rather obvious miscarriage of justice), but it forced those involved (as suspects and witnesses) to investigate and reflect upon themselves, their neighbors, and their friends – and reveal their findings in a court of law – and, as such, illuminates an important aspect of turn-of-the-century urban life: masks and hidden identities. Identity, presented either authentically or as an illusion, became supremely relevant in the modern metropolis, where the ubiquity of strangers, new faces, and mysterious crimes shaped the way city people narrated the search for love and intimacy.[60] As they saw it (or wrote it), the anonymity of the big city made crime more likely and life more risky, and we saw in the previous chapters the ways in which love was so often linked to murders and swindlings – a groom whose happy bride was blissfully unaware of his existing marriage, a woman murdered by her jealous lover, or a prominent man blackmailed by his mysterious paramour. Indeed, Berliners, who so loved to talk about their city, emplotted love using a dramatic lexicon made up of phrases like deception, danger, and masks. Modern, urban love was something that was said to be difficult, even risky, and the notion that navigating urban relationships came down to one's ability to avoid being duped, to don a mask, and to snatch love out of the jaws of danger became quite prevalent in both newspapers and literature at the turn of the century. In his 1910 novel, *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (*The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*), for example, Rainer Maria Rilke takes readers into the mind of his protagonist, who struggles to acclimate himself to the modern urban environment (in this case, Paris). The sounds of the late-night electric trains keep him up, as do the many automobiles, pedestrians, and the entire panoply of city noises. He writes that he is "learning to

[60] On the centrality of masks in the modern city (in this case, St. Petersburg), see Steinberg, *Petersburg fin de siècle*, chapter three.

see" in a new way, a new *urban* way, and one of the first things he realizes it "how many faces there are. There are tons of people but even more faces, for each person has more than one."[61] Rudolf Lothar, the insightful columnist for the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, made a similar point in 1909 when he noted that love itself had become nothing more than "colloquialisms, conversational artifice, and masked games." It had become fashionable, he said, to be deceptive, to wear a mask. "The person who told the truth in today's society," he concluded, "would play a sad role" or, in other words, be unsuccessful and lonely.[62] In both Rilke's novel and Lothar's column, then, masks at once plague and assist the modern urban dweller, and to eschew masks or lay one's identity bare was, at least according to a modern mindset, to be old-fashioned, traditional, and out of sync with the times.

At the same time, we have witnessed time and again this struggle between traditional and modern, and we know that Berliners who embraced modern techniques most often found themselves at odds with hegemonic middle-class respectability. This was especially true in matters of love and intimacy, for while Berliners almost universally harbored a fascination for modern methods like street encounters and casual dating, it was another thing altogether to accept the arm of a stranger on a streetcar or on the sidewalk. As we saw in this chapter, this dissonance between the bliss of imagined love and the strictures of normative masculinity and femininity played out in the Paul Kuhnt trial, where Frieda Kliem, who used modern methods to bridge the gap between her middle-class aspirations and the realities of turn-of-the-century Berlin, in many ways found herself on trial as much as the defendant. Walter Bahn probed at the issue of her identity, and he emphasized the fact that she was not what she said she was. Her fake

[61] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997), 7-8.

[62] Rudolf Lothar, "Freundschaft und Geselligkeit," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 31 December 1909, Nr. 834.

wedding rings, her "widow" personal ad, her "uncle" boyfriend – these were masks, tools for navigating modern intimacy, and while using them made her modern, it also (and consequently) made her decidedly suspect. Paul Kuhnt himself was taken to task for wearing a mask, as well. The chief judge, in his very direct questioning of the defendant, kept returning to the fact that Kuhnt had been leading a double life and had been caught trying, unsuccessfully, to hold in balance the trappings of middle-class respectability and the adventure of modern (if extramarital) love via personal ads. Walter Bahn was observant enough to realize that the case hinged on proving his client possessed stability, authenticity, and predictability – those pillars of middle-class respectability – and, accordingly, did his utmost to persuade the jury that Kuhnt was a model of consistency. Indeed, we need only remember Bahn's argument that Kuhnt had been so predictable and so firmly attached to the rails of respectability that he stole Frieda's valuables from the commuter train but then locked them away because he was too ashamed to profit from them in any way. Bahn, in other words, did everything he could to put Frieda's masks on full display and totally unmask his client.

Of course, personal ads themselves were also fully entwined with masks, and this is perhaps the best way to understand the fact that personal ads, which rocketed to such remarkable prominence at the turn of the century, plateaued just before WWI and, despite their undeniable promise as *the* twentieth-century highway to love, never became anything other than a seldom traveled byway. One of the most fascinating things about personal ads was the chasm separating their proponents and opponents. While fans of personal ads (who were nearly always past or current users of ads) without fail pointed to the fact they allowed Berliners to take off their masks and meet others who had done the same (this was, they said, the biggest advantage of personal ads), critics saw only the news stories, novels, and plays that recounted tales of

unsuspecting men and women getting duped by swindlers and murderers. Stories – real stories – like that of Emma Schäfer or Frieda Kliem naturally underscored the fact that not everyone who used ads took off his or her mask – indeed, neither Frieda nor her killer, Paul Kuhnt, had told the truth in their ads – and the interest these cases generated in the newspapers likewise offers proof of Berliners' fascination in masked love. These cases were naturally aberrations, statistical outliers, though personal ads were probably not the mask-free zones their promoters claimed they were, either. In all likelihood, personal ads were probably somewhere in between the two characterizations. After all, swindlers were only successful because so many Berliners used them honestly.

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Were masks – that is, getting caught wearing one – the ultimate undoing of Frieda Kliem and of personal ads, more generally? Was it their lack of authenticity, predictability, and stability what doomed personal ads to perpetual liminality while the other modern methods we have discussed largely flourished over the rest of the twentieth century? Would Paul Kuhnt have been convicted of murder if Frieda's many masks had gone undiscovered, if Walter Bahn had allowed the state attorney and chief judge to trump up Kuhnt's double life and myriad masks without challenge or rebuttal? It all certainly seems plausible, for while sports, office and apartment building romances, street encounters, casual dating, and free-love unions were without a doubt on the rise at the turn of the twentieth century, it is clear that stability, especially vis-à-vis identity, remained the bedrock of hegemonic norms of respectability. Indeed, stability, not love, was the reigning ideology of the time (one columnist even dug up an ostensibly scientific term – *Misoneism* – to describe turn-of-the-century society's distrust of "the new").[63] Masks, insofar as

[63] Rudolf Lothar, "Die Kunst des Auseinandergehens," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 12 January 1911, Nr. 22.

they represented a more fleeting, short-term, individualistic, and independent approach to love, family, and community, were precisely the unsettling and mysterious part of modern life that so offended the established and – at least as far as cultural and moral normativity went – authoritative power that was the middle class. Personal ads, too, cut against the grain of stable, middle-class identity, but, as we saw in Chapter Four, it is clear that there was something fundamentally different about them, something that placed them on an entirely new level in the turn-of-the-century city; indeed, something that did not gradually and eventually get folded in to the realm of middle-class normativity, middle-class masculinity and femininity. Personal ads represented the wholesale reimagining of a system of love and dating, one that derived its effectiveness from the size and movement of the city itself instead of simply working to combat the dynamics of the modern metropolis. After all, the modern methods of Chapters Two and Three each in some way aimed at shrinking the big city, making many small towns (in apartment buildings, in offices, on Berliners' daily routes – either by foot or by streetcar – to work) out of a single metropolis. To make strangers slightly more familiar was to strip away at least one mask even if, for parents and grandparents, the only way to know what one was getting was to meet in the four walls of the family living room. Personal ads approached the concept of masks differently; in fact, to use personal ads was to accept of the reality of masks, acknowledge that all city dwellers wore them, and then choose to sort through the various masks one encountered and decide which one was most appealing. This was, then, not the outright rejection of masks, not even the acceptance of fewer masks, but the very practical embrace of a modern world filled with masks and the individualistic decision to pick from among them. This was too radical a premise for turn-of-the-century Berliners to embrace, and it remained so throughout the decades that followed.

Frieda Kliem appears to have made her choice about which mask she found most pleasing when she arranged her rendezvous in the forest with the person she thought was Adolf Mertens. She had, in fact, fallen in love with the mask that was Adolf Mertens. Her words in that final letter to Otto Mewes – where she describes bicycling to the suburbs, swimming in a lake, laying in a hammock, and taking in the scents of the flowering acacias along the way home – belie a tranquility that is remarkable for Frieda's personality and, at least as far as the narrative went, uncommon for the fast-paced world of the modern metropolis at the turn of the century. Things had not been particularly easy for Frieda, and, as we have seen, she spent much of her life searching for love, intimacy, and connection, only to come up perpetually short. And even though Frieda's tragic end only fed the narrative of modern urban love as a sort of macabre masquerade, one where men and women who, in shrugging off tradition and adopting the modern methods, exposed themselves to deception, danger, and disaster, her experience of love at the turn of the century is best understood in terms of that last letter: Frieda Kliem embraced the big city, the problem of masks and stable identity, and the radically new technology of personal ads; she left behind the shores of tradition and traversed the choppy waters of modern love; and she found, if only for a characteristically fleeting moment, love in the big city.

EPILOGUE

Frieda Kliem's Berlin is still around; it shows up at various points throughout the city: the Landwehrkanal, which saw the desperate and weary faces of Berliners worse off than Frieda before they threw themselves in it, still flows along quietly, lined in some neighborhoods yet with the turn-of-the-century villas that have not been destroyed or renovated; giant industrial complexes like the famous Elizabeth-Hof on Erkelenzdamm, which housed not only a number of turn-of-the-century factories but also the meagerly-paid, fed, and clothed Berliners who worked there, still dot the city and recall the ubiquitous *Mietskasernen*, or tenement houses, of the industrial boom that built the city and attracted women like Frieda from the provinces; and one can still take the tram out to Spandau and stand in front of Frieda's final address at Franzstrasse 5, and both it and the neighboring buildings appear only minimally changed. For that matter, turn-of-the-century landmarks like the *Tiergarten* and Friedrichstrasse are naturally still there, though the international retailers that line the latter evoke a slightly different feel than a century ago, and the horse-drawn buggies that carried passengers throughout and around the former have been replaced with Segways rolling quietly along neatly paved paths.

For the most part, however, the Berlin of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century is gone, and one only catches hard-earned glimpses of it.[1] In a way, turn-of-the-century Berlin actually lives on in this sense, for, as we have seen, a lack of permanence was one of its most remarkable traits. Berlin was for the Berlin-born journalist, Arthur Eloesser, a city "without memory, without tradition, without a sense of duty to the past."[2] Indeed, as Eloesser went on to

[1] It should be noted, however, that Peter Fritzsche's excellent – and out-of-print – historical walking tour of Berlin offers a host of fantastic hints for where to look for the Berlin of yesteryear. Peter Fritzsche and Karen Hewitt, *Berlinwalks* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994).

[2] Quoted in Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 30. In this way, Fritzsche notes, "Berlin has remained the paradigmatic modern city because its character has been so forcefully determined by the experience of transience." Ibid., 31.

write, to live in Berlin at the turn of the century was to "swim toward a shoreless future."[3] We have seen this metaphor time and again throughout this dissertation, whether in the longing of Gertrud Steinbach's protagonist, who runs into a lake toward the seemingly limitless horizon as an expression of her yearning for independence from the man who waits for her on the shore;[4] or, as these chapters have suggested, in the sense that not a few Berliners left the stable shores of tradition and ran headlong into the rough waters of a modern sensibility and a new approach to love. This process was far from easy, for the waves of the big city crashed hard upon women like Frieda Kliem; nor was it necessarily permanent, for the tides of modern life and middle-class*ness* swept and pulled one away and back in unpredictable and disorienting ways.

This dissertation has focused on the experience of modern urban life atop these waters, and if the experience of Frieda Kliem and the many others who have appeared here indicate anything, it is that this transition from stable land to a shoreless future is, in fact, part of the modern condition. Berliners like Frieda Kliem never arrived on the other side of the choppy waters, as close as they perhaps thought they were to doing so. Metropolitan Berlin offered a bewildering array of choices and outlets for individualism, but these routes to another shore were tenuous at best. There were some Berliners, as Andrew Lees describes, who praised the fact that, in the modern metropolis, "men and women were on their own [and needed] to assert themselves in order to achieve success" and that this "strengthened the larger collectivities of the nation and the state."[5] But no matter how true this perhaps was for Germany's economic development, the lives and stories under consideration in this dissertation suggest that the compulsion to act on

[3] Quoted in Fritzsche, "Vagabond in the Fugitive City," 386.

[4] Gertrud Steinbach, "Liebe," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 September 1906, Nr. 207.

[5] Lees, *Cities Perceived*, 197-198.

one's own in matters of love and intimacy was anything but constructive or simple, for the rising tide of a free market of lifestyle choices about love and intimacy did not, in fact, lift all boats. Modern, middle-class life was adorned with the apparent freedom of sidestepping the conventions and perceived strictures of tradition, of marriage, of meeting within the "four walls" of the parents' home; and yet the very fabric of life in the city at the peak of industrialization was threadbare enough that most Berliners – especially women – simply needed marriage and the four walls to achieve the status of middle-class respectability.[6] The turn-of-the-century city, in other words, offered women like Frieda Kliem the chance to make it on their own, to break with convention and order their lives – and, importantly, their intimate relationships – according to their individual fancies. And yet this liberation was cruelly Janus-faced, for the freedom the rough waters indeed offered from the shore was bundled with the grim imperative of the "struggle for existence," in which one *had* to make it or else go under, drown.

This coupling of marriage and respectability comes into even greater relief when compared to the Berlin (and greater Germany) of a century later, when there is a decidedly strong trend away from marriage. Indeed, in an article that recalls the promotional articles of matchmaking giant Fritz Podszus's *Heirats-Zeitung* from the turn of the century (cited in Chapter Four), Germany's largest online "matchmaker," Parship, recently published the results of its study of Europeans' interest in marriage under the title, "Marriage? Not that important." Of the 52% of European singles currently looking for a long-term relationship, Parship claims, only a third are interested in getting married. Germans – especially those living in big cities like Berlin – are even less eager to tie the knot, Parship says, with only 20% reporting that they hope

[6] Ginger Frost makes a similar point with regard to the extent to which bourgeois women "had more to lose" and "hesitated to risk their reputations." Frost, *Living in Sin*, 216.

to get married.[7] It is naturally outside the scope of this dissertation to conjecture as to why marriage has lost its allure for Berliners and Germans in the twenty-first century, but the contrast with turn-of-the-century Berlin is nevertheless revelatory of an important point about the triangular relationship between marriage, the middle class, and the turn-of-the-century individual. A century ago, Berliners were quite taken with the liberating potential of an individualistic approach to love and dating, but while individualism, had, somewhat vaguely speaking, been on a steady rise for well over a century at that point (indeed, ever since the Enlightenment), it seems that turn-of-the-century Berliners were hardly confident in the stability or reliability of the unfettered individual and instead believed that they needed marriage to establish themselves in the modern world. Marriage, as much as we saw it critiqued and, at least as a fantasy, ignored in Chapter Three, was still firmly, utterly entrenched in turn-of-the-century metropolitan society as the dream of middle-class life, the ultimate status-maker, stability-creator, and respectability-generator of even the self-consciously modern generation of 1900. We need only to recall Greta Keller crooning "*Heirat*..." in the background as Sally Bowles contemplates marriage in the 1972 film version of *Cabaret* (based, of course, loosely on Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*) – or, closer chronologically to our story here, the "modern girls" of Arthur Zapp's 1903 serial novel (discussed at length in Chapter Three), who all end up marrying.

We must therefore resist the urge to believe entirely turn-of-the-century Berliners when they decried the "men who don't marry," "modern types of women," and the "modern aversion

[7] Annemarie Lüning, "Heiraten? Nicht so wichtig," Parship Magazin, accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.parship.de/beziehung/heiraten-nicht-so-wichtig.htm.

to marriage."[8] These were not characters and trends invented out of thin air, as we have seen throughout the foregoing chapters; but they were also the product of Berlin talking about itself and, as such, as much tasty narrative as oppressive reality. Indeed, it is the way Berliners built upon these narrated realities that is the most indicative of their thinking about love, marriage, and risk in turn-of-the-century Berlin. The fortuitous encounter – which, as we saw time and again, was an absolute fascination of modern, metropolitan Berlin – was at heart a middle-class fantasy through which Berliners balanced their irresistible attraction to the freedom of the modern world with the ever-present awareness of the risks associated with it; it was, put differently, a sort of urban reverie in which one frolicked on the rough waters, as it were, while remaining solidly on the shore.

Masks – another idée fixe of turn-of-the-century Berlin (and of *fin de siècle* cities, more generally, as Mark Steinberg demonstrates)[9] – were also laden with the tension of fascination and risk that characterizes the experience of the modern city. Berliners' interest in masks was far more complex than a rather conventional "carnivalesque" reading of masks might suggest. After all, the centrality of masks at the turn of the century was not primarily in their usefulness in letting one live out a consequence-free fantasy and turn the world upside down. Masks, as a trope in the narrated reality of the city – a character in what we have been calling the "word city" á la Fritzsche and Pike – were instead convenient shorthand for the inauthenticity that at once liberated and unsettled middle-class Berliners, and their complex relationship with them is evidence of how contested the notion of the individual/individualism became in the modern city.

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[8] Dorothee Goebeler, "Männer, die nicht heiraten," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 5 June 1912, Nr. 282; A. von Wartenberg, "Moderne Frauen-Typen," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 January 1907, Nr. 1; Dagobert von Gerhardt-Amyntor, "Die moderne Ehescheu," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 8 November 1908, Nr. 571.

[9] Steinberg, *Petersburg fin de siècle*, chapter three.

This, it seems, is what was so discomfiting about the potential liberation of modern methods, approaches, and sensibilities: to act selfishly – indeed, in one's own self-interests – vis-à-vis love, marriage, and intimacy was to distance oneself from a community of values, traditions, and *Bürgerlichkeit* (or middle-class*ness*). The risk associated with this trade – a community of values for an intimate community – was great, as women like Frieda Kliem knew all too well. Indeed, as we will recall, Frieda frequently bent the truth (about being a widow, about her "uncle") as part of a difficult and ultimately unsuccessful decision to break with one aspect of middle-class respectability (authenticity) in order to gain another (stability). The fact that some succeeded and found (or claimed to have found) the shore across the choppy waters only ratcheted up the tension of modern metropolitan life all the more – the opposite shore seemed closer than ever, and yet the defense of middle-class*ness* (and the emphasis on knowledge, stability, and opacity) grew fiercer in response.[10]

Living and loving in the modern metropolis meant confronting these tensions, uncertainties, and instabilities – a fact not lost on Baudelaire in nineteenth-century Paris.[11] And yet, where Baudelaire's aesthetic was founded on the ability to feel at home in the flux of the

[10] Ute Frevert's recent work on trust (and the history of emotions, more generally) offers a useful perspective on the relationship between individualism, tradition, and the middle class. Frevert examines that the increasing but yet inchoate robustness of individualism at the turn of the century, which, as we have suggested, left men and women in the somewhat uncomfortable position of having a greater degree of autonomy (from the strictures of tradition and/or communal values) in their lives and yet the burden and risk of being solely responsible for their failures. She suggests that trust and trustworthiness, as a sort of intangible interpersonal currency, acquired greater importance as a result, for it eased slightly the risk associated with modern individual decision-making. In this way, she argues, trust allowed individuals a certain space, an ability to develop their independence and structure their lives according to their own subjectivities while maintaining a certain connection to the people they trusted. Trust, put differently, had a "binding" and "linking" effect in love, family, and interpersonal relationships insofar as it created an elective community of values. The rising importance of trust, she concludes, was a "corollary of the individualism that accompanied the development of middle-class society." Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 213.

[11] In "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire writes that, "for the flâneur, for the passionate spectator," – that is, for the consummate urban dweller – "it is an immense joy to set in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet feel oneself everywhere at home [...]." Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitsch (New York: Norton, 2001), 795.

modern city, our examination of love in the big city suggests that turn-of-the-century Berliners were anything but comfortable with the ephemeral, impermanent world around them. To be sure, there were those who used these qualities of modern life to their advantage, and it is not inconsequential that Walter Bahn, when appealing to the jury for his client's innocence (which, at that point, had become a foregone conclusion), referred to the "fog" and "gelatinous mass" that characterized, he argued, the whole situation. Swindlers of all sorts, in fact, played on Berliners' uneasiness about the tensions of the modern city to great success (or at least until they were caught and had to give the money back), and these swindlings, in turn, only fed the narrative of danger, risk, and masks. But as much as Berliners were fascinated by the fleeting, fugitive, and impermanent – indeed, as much as Berlin's narrative about itself was both stylistically and substantively consumed with fluidity and uncertainty – the private, intimate, emotional lives of the Berliners under study in this dissertation suggest that they were, in fact, quite uncomfortable with these abiding themes of urbanity in the turn-of-the-century city.

One does not necessarily feel this tension in Berlin today, however, and the uncertainties and instabilities of pre-1989 Berlin were naturally of a much different sort. We need only to look a decade past the Berlin under study here – to the Weimar era – to see a re-solidification of many aspects of the modern city, not the least of which was the strikingly robust individualism that has for so long characterized the 1920s. To be sure, Weimar Berlin had its own disorienting blend of anxiety and elation, but the unsettling aspects of this period had clearer, more distinct outlines. Hyperinflation, political instability, the Great Depression, even the rise of fascism – these were disquieting, to say the least, but they were more or less clear to see and hardly existed in the fog or gelatinous mass Walter Bahn spoke of in 1916. If, as Detlev Peukert famously argued, the Weimar era let loose or liberated "classical modernity" and was "a brief, headlong tour of the

fascinating, and fateful, choices made possible by the modern world," then the re-solidification of the somewhat fragile individualist ethos of the turn of the century and the explosion of a broader variety of sexual identities and approaches to love and intimacy in the 1920s is easier to understand.[12] The inherent tensions of turn-of-the-century individualism, in other words, had been (at least partially) released. Of course, it was not simply the birth of a new decade or even necessarily the disposal of the political system of imperial Germany that set free the full development of modernity; much more, it was, as Eric Weitz puts it, "war and revolution" that, among other things, "caused a tectonic shift in moral and sexual values."[13]

At the risk of ascribing too great an impact to The Great War and the revolutions that followed it, this, it seems, is the best way to understand the dramatic difference between 1900 and 1920 – not simply in the visibility and popularity of alternative sexualities (including transvestitism, which, in the 1920s, is quite visible in even newspaper personal ads) and moralities (such as an apparent comfort with nudity, sex, and prostitution in the Weimar Republic), but, more generally, in the robustness of individualism and the extent to which Berliners were more content with the flux of the modern city and less anxious about the place of tradition and stability in the modern world. The exchange of a community of values for an intimate community was, in other words, less fraught in the Weimar Republic than it had been at the turn of the century, and approaches to love and intimacy in Weimar-era Berlin were thus much different.[14]

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[12] Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), xiv.

[13] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 298.

[14] For further discussion of the upheaval created by WWI, see Martin Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt. Revolution, Inflation, und Moderne: München, 1914-1924* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

This is not to say, however, that love in 1920s Berlin was necessarily any easier, deeper, or longer lasting. The fabric of Weimar society offered a unique set of potential challenges to love, intimacy, and even family life all its own, and these manifested themselves in both real and imagined ways, just as turn-of-the-century dynamics did.[15] For that matter, we could examine any number of eras and contexts (the Third Reich; World War II; post-war Germany; the GDR; etc.) and discover an entire array of obstacles to finding love and making meaningful connections.[16] Indeed, nowadays one is bombarded with promotional material for the twenty-first-century equivalent of the newspaper personal ad or matchmaking service: internet dating. Commercials and advertisements for online dating services like Parship, Match.com, or eHarmony nearly always contain testimonials of (now-happy) men and women observing that modern life leaves one no time for dating, that it is difficult to meet people outside of one's circle of work colleagues, and even that cities and what we might call the virtual metropolis of online interaction are so large and impersonal that finding a meeting relationship is all but impossible.[17] These complaints should sound familiar – they are, of course, precisely the problems and concerns that attracted so much attention at the turn of the century.

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[15] See, for example, Maria Tartar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Paul Lerner, "Hysterical Cures: Gender and Performance in World War I and Weimar Germany," *History Workshop Journal* 45 (1998): 79-101; also my article on masculinity and fatherhood: Tyler Carrington, "Conflicted Fatherhood: Masculinity and the Modern World in the Life and Work of Thomas Mann," *Snodi. Pubblici e privati nella storia contemporanea* 7 (Spring 2011): 16-37.For other contexts, see Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Leslie Hall, *Hidden Anxieties: Male Sexuality, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991); Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes, "Continuity and Change in Middle-Class Fatherhood, 1925-1939: The Culture-Conduct Connection," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55 (1993): 455-468.

[16] For example, Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[17] See my forthcoming article on these similarities, "Analog Love, Digital Love: Navigating Intimacy in the Modern Age."

It may be that love and meaningful connections are inherently elusive, difficult to pin down. Or perhaps this is simply the narrative of love in modern world. Raymond Carver's short story, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," seems to make a similar point, as the characters gravitate irresistibly and naturally towards violence, drama, and heartache when describing past and present relationships and talking about love, more generally.[18] On the one hand, the emplotment of love (to borrow from Hayden White) as difficult, scarce, and fleeting picked up with the birth of the metropolis because it underscored in the most intimate of ways the larger and more powerful urban trope of instability, impermanence, and uncertainty.[19] On the other, the heartache of Berliners like Frieda Kliem and the insecurity of would-be husbands like Ernst Schwartz was very real, and the flourishing of personal ads, casual dating, and more individualistic approaches to love and marriage reveal undeniable riffs in the "when grandfather took grandmother" world of the nineteenth century. We might, therefore, ultimately conclude that the modern world – epitomized by the modern metropolis – not only exacerbated some of the long-standing and inherent risks of love, intimacy, and marriage, but also created a whole new set of them. The story we have seen play out in this dissertation registers the tensions of Berliners coming to terms with these risks and, in some cases, creating paths around or through them, but it is clear that there was and is no panacea and that the story of love in the big city at the turn of the century is, in many ways, our own story today, as well.

[18] Raymond Carver, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981).

[19] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

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